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ABSTRACT

This book targeted especially to those who counsel middle-school through high school students, shares experiences, concepts, happenings, and anecdotes of a school counselor. Concepts are presented for those interested in developing functional orientations in the area of helping relationships. The first chapter discusses the concept of help and presents anecdotes of a school counselor helping students. The second chapter discusses the relationship of theory and practice, focusing on the hierarchy of needs, the frustration-aggression cycle, and unconscious influences on behavior and perception. The third chapter presents eclectic approaches and talks about the needs of students. The fourth chapter presents anecdotes focusing on methods of working with students. The fifth chapter discusses listening and providing confidentiality. The sixth chapter is about empathy and the seventh, responsibility. The eighth chapter discusses the need to belong. The ninth chapter focuses on sexuality, including the emotional experience, belonging, and sex and the practicing school counselor. The 10th chapter discusses sexual abuse, its prevention, aftermath, and treatment of victims. The 11th chapter has as its theme drug abuse and the 12th drug abuse prevention. The 13th chapter discusses career counseling. The 14th deals with sex education, homosexuality, and suicide. The last chapter focuses on the role of the school counselor. A paper published in 1978 on the practice of counseling in the secondary school is reprinted in the appendix. Other appendixes contain information on the practice of counseling in the secondary school, recollections on participation in the counseling profession, and sample copies of the counselor's functional orientation worksheet. (ABL)

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COUNSELING KIDS

"A view from the front lines with the goal of stimulating valid functional orientation for counselors in the schools."

Donald L. Peters

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DEDICATION

To the German officers who failed to blow the bridge at Remagen, I had thought to say. Or, to the lieutenant who fired the panzerfaust with the defective detonator, instead of me. Or, to those who did not commit the 13th Airborne. Without them this book would have been highly unlikely.

But more important than all of these—

Let me dedicate this book to the readers, the caring people—my counseling colleagues across this land and others with whom we share this common bond—who find interest in helping young people and strive to make this a better world.

Without them the content of the book would be pointless.

PREFACE

This is a book for any and all who are actively interested in counseling kids, especially of middle-school through high-school age. It recognizes the need for a common base of understanding amongst all who share this interest.

If you are looking for a burn-it-down, hate-the-other-sex, throw-the-bad-kids-out, it's-all-the-parents'-fault approach, pass this one by.

I see a need for recognizing things as they are. Simply aiming fingers of blame or defiance at all those other imperfect beings out there, instead of plunging in to do what we can do, goes nowhere.

Or if you want definitive pronouncements with extensive references, again, look elsewhere. This is something of another sort—although, to insure an adequate view of issues and aspects, I have included my paper from the USOE/AACD project, "The Practice of Counseling in the Secondary School" as an appendix.

In general, what you will find here are things I have discussed with counselors-in-training and others interested in developing ***functional orientations*** in the area of helping relationships and especially in that profession I believe to have the greatest potential for helping kids and furthering our best interests in this world . . .

I mean to share experiences, concepts, happenings, and anecdotes (at times altered as to identifying details but not in essence and outcome) with something of a conviction that counselors need to share such things in our joint venture of trying to provide effective help.

Too long ago, I recall declining an invitation from Leo Goldman, past editor of what is now called the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, to do a book on counseling.

Having traditional views of what the content should be, based on the many books already on the shelves, I doubted that there would be an adequate audience. I was involved in too many things and really did not have the time. These and more were all relatively healthy rationalizations.

Of course, since then, I have come to recognize that the real reason for not trying was a fear, the empty feeling that no one really cares. Now I know, many do. I owe it to them and to myself, in spite of seeming failures all around (or maybe because of these), to try. To assert, to say unashamed, I care. To recognize, *we* care. And to declare that many who say they don't, really do, denying for a variety of reasons—sometimes because of the seeming futility of it all, sometimes because they do not want to be associated with some con artists who say they do while tearing down everything in sight.

So with due credit to Dr. Goldman and never a blame when I fall short, read on.

DLF

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION iii

PREFACE v

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER ONE
HELP 5

CHAPTER TWO
THEORY MAKES PERFECT 23
- Hierarchy of Needs 27
- Homeostasis 29
- Frustration-Aggression Cycle 31
- Self 34
- Conflict 36
- Unconscious Influences on Behavior and Perception 38

CHAPTER THREE
ECLECTIC ALL THE WAY 41
- Working It Out 43
- To Start With 45
- Defining the Situation 48
- No 90-Day Guarantees 51
- Changes 54
- What Do They Need? 55

CHAPTER FOUR
FIGURING IT OUT—TOGETHER 59
- Face Facts 61
- Honest! 64
- Respect? 65
- On Short-term Relationships 68
- Promises, Promises 70
- The Uncooperative 73

CHAPTER FIVE

IN THE LIMITED TIME AVAILABLE **77**
The Monstrous Infants 78
Minimize Threat 80
Provide Confidentiality 82
Listen 85
Maximize Freedom 88
Note the Consequences 91

CHAPTER SIX

BEYOND OMBUDSMEN **95**
Empathize 97
Accept 99
Relate 102
Teach Concepts 105
Define Rational Reality 107

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESPONSIBILITY, ONE STEP AT A TIME **111**
Explore and Discover Purpose 112
Help to Establish Goals 115
Emphasize the Positive 118
Help Them to Develop Plans 120
Enable Action 123
Imperatives in Effective Counseling 127

CHAPTER EIGHT

REALITY IN OUR FUN-ORIENTED SOCIETY **131**
Action 132
Learning and Discovery 133
Emotional Experience 134
That Need to Belong 137
A Voice in What's Going On 138
Being Somebody 139
The Look Ahead 143
The Teen Fun Formula 145
Using the Formula in Counseling 146

CHAPTER NINE

SEX IS NO FOUR-LETTER WORD **149**
Consuming Concerns 151
On Natural Functions 153
The Look Ahead 155
Action 156
Discovery 157
Emotional Experience 158
Belonging 159

Being Somebody 161
Voice 161
Sex and the Practicing School Counselor 163

CHAPTER TEN
SEXUAL ABUSE 167
Predispositions 168
Insufficient Inner Control 170
Opportunity 170
Lack of Realistic Understanding 171
Prevention 173
Aftermath 175
Treatment of Victims 176
  Catharsis 177
  Acceptance 177
  Rational Reality Testing 177
  Resolution of Guilt 178
  Valid, Functional Conceptualizations 178
  Family Understanding and Support 180
  Control of Environment 180
  The Look Ahead 180
  Treatment of Juvenile Offenders 181

CHAPTER ELEVEN
STONED, STONING, AND STONE WALLS 185
Action 188
Discovery 190
Emotional Experience 191
Belonging 193
Voice 194
Being Somebody 195
The Look Ahead 197

CHAPTER TWELVE
ON THE SCENE, PREVENTION 201
Helping on the Scene 204
Prevention 208

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
CAREERS AHEAD 215
Resistance to Planning 215
It Ought to Be Fun 217
Being Somebody—Really 219
Career Exploration 220
College, or Something Better 224
Group Activities 226

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
DARING TO HELP ... 231
Sex Film ... 231
Homosexuality ... 236
Suicide ... 240

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
STAYING ALIVE, PROFESSIONALLY ... 249
Counselor Recommendations ... 251
Failure and Limitations ... 255
"Roll" and Function ... 260

APPENDIX A
THE PRACTICE OF COUNSELING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL ... 267
- General Working Definition ... 270
- Historical Background ... 271
- The Role of the Secondary School Counselor ... 273
- Description of the Practice of Counseling ... 276
  - Counseling and Group Guidance ... 277
  - Registration, Curriculum, and Special Course Placement ... 278
  - Testing ... 280
  - Records ... 281
  - Conferences and Consultation ... 283
  - Coordination, Liaison, and Public Relations ... 283
  - Professional Growth, Program Development, Research, and Innovation ... 284
  - Evaluation and Accountability Systems ... 284
- Issues and Current Concerns ... 285
  - Relationships ... 285
  - Load ... 289
  - "Generalist" or "Specialist?" ... 290
  - Emphasis on Individual or Group Procedures? ... 291
  - Media ... 292
  - "Seeing All Students?" ... 293
  - Counselor Role in Enabling Change ... 293
  - Career Education ... 295
  - Value Formation ... 295
  - Student Discipline ... 296
  - Confidentiality ... 297
  - Drug Abuse ... 298
  - College Admission, Financial Aid, and Employment Applications ... 299
  - Goals and Objectives ... 299
- Recommendations ... 300
  - Professional Preparation ... 300
  - Legislative and Governmental ... 302

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPATION IN THE PROFESSION 305
Recollections 307

APPENDIX C
"DEVELLOPING YOUR HIGH SCHOOL PLAN"
(MEDIA TOOL EXAMPLE, FOR GROUP WORK) 315

APPENDIX D
COUNSELOR'S FUNCTIONAL ORIENTATION WORKSHEET 329
Functional Orientation Worksheet 333

INDEX 339

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 345

INTRODUCTION

The grand idea, as at least some of us saw it, was for kids to have *someone to talk with* in every school in the nation.

The hope was, of course, that all school staff members would be approachable, that kids would feel they could talk with their teachers and with the school administrators. But realistically, some kids, those who might need someone to talk with the most, were at odds with authority figures.

And sometimes, even when parents, teachers, and others meant to be open and available to kids, they were too busy with other things and bogged down with troubles of their own.

The someone of the idea was to be called *counselor.*

In every school a counselor would be available for youngsters to talk with about their own personal concerns, about their plans and hopes for the future, and about their special problems, beyond those they might expect help with in the academic classroom. The school counselor would have both the time and the professional training to genuinely help.

The hope was that caring, competent people in such key positions, made available to each and every youngster in America throughout their school years, would do much more than meet the challenge of Sputnik. They would promote human understanding, realistically deal with the needs of people, and head off trouble—both for kids and the world.

In all the call was for a significant change, a change with which to cope with all the other changes in the lives of young people.

Resistance and misunderstandings were inevitable. And, of course, disagreements did exist as to which way to go, which ivory tower to worship, and whether to devote time to helping kids directly or, instead, to servicing teachers, parents, and the system—which as many people often tell us, also helps kids very, very much.

Today, the grand idea prevails, in spite of corruptions.

The primary concerns in this book will be the direct stuff, even though the other cannot be avoided.

In this, my consideration of counseling procedures and techniques may well neglect crediting noteworthy minds who may have claim to the origin and/or the condemnation of the ideas presented. Let me, this once, offer apologies to those who may suppose this to be necessary. But what I take time to put down here is meant to be more than a rehash of salient theories.

I do not buy any single counseling or personality theory in total. Neither do I wish to invent another.

The thoughts shared are offered because they have been found of use in helping and not because they can be credited to greats. At the same time, I do not intentionally mean to avoid mentioning people when this seems appropriate.

One significant discovery for me in life is that even the greats turn out to be people. Maybe not just people, but people.

You and I share this common bond with the greats. We are people—you and I and they.

And when we get into any discussion of approaches to the personal, relating activity called counseling, insight is to be gained through an acquaintance with the authors and the careers stemming from and interlaced with their views. The background and past experiences influence the thinking, methods, leanings, and conclusions of individuals—published or unpublished, on campus or on the grass at DuPont Circle, Freud or Fonda . . .

Consequently, I feel obliged to talk freely about myself, and/or my self, throughout the book. Some will not like this I suspect.

In any event, my wish is not to impress, convert, or sway but to stimulate reactive thought on what ought to be, in the development of the *functional orientations* necessary when counseling in the real world.

Even the best of theory does not accomplish much until it becomes integrated with happenings and circumstances; that is, until it is seen as providing rescuing conceptualizations, consistent with experience, in viewing the tasks at hand.

My wish is that you might reaffirm and use that which you find to be sound, and that you reject with added insight all that you do not.

I well understand the trap of being pulled into simply following the fine theory of others (later to be discarded) rather than doing the work of searching experience for the practical truth which is the point of this book.

Now one brief story before we get with it—

In 1970 at a National Annual Meeting of the Boy Scouts of America, I met a fellow Eagle Scout by the name of Ross Perot, and impressed by the purpose and character of the man, I asked him to be the ASCA Luncheon Speaker at our coming convention in Atlantic City. He accepted and then found he could not make it, providing an entertaining substitute—about the same week he had his picture on the cover of *Business Week*, as I remember. But the words I am trying to get to are these: in inviting him I said, "This is the most influential audience in the world. School counselors. Those who work with American youth and guide them in their moments of decision."

These are words to keep before us, as I write and we think together—whether you be a counselor or another interested in kids and in what we are about.

School counselors are the most influential people in the world. They work with American youth and guide them in their moments of decision.

CHAPTER **ONE**

HELP

"There are six of them," the boy told me, sweeping hair back from wide eyes, as though this was the self-evident conclusion to what he had been trying to muster courage to tell me. The thought that we were moving toward sexual concerns did not so much as cross my mind.

Barry was twelve at the time, a boy of high-average academic potential, but apparently unable to do passing seventh-grade work in this, his first quarter of junior high.

We had rehashed the usual, discussed study habits, reviewed the standardized test results together, and noted the common problem of getting down to work in school.

From what he had shared, self-image seemed a problem, although he was a handsome youngster. His older siblings had been in trouble with authorities. He was sure that his teachers thought badly of him from the time they first heard his name. He was inclined to blame them when they got after him for not doing his work.

But there was more—

In our third session, he blurted, "There are things, you know. Things."

"Other things bothering you."

"Things on my mind."

"Like what?" The pace was much slower than it comes off on paper.

"I don't know if I can tell you. I trust you and all. But the way I feel . . . I want to. But I can't talk about it."

"You already are, Barry. You're started," I told him. "You can . . . If you want. It's strictly up to you . . . "

"Well, I'm bothered. Really bothered. Ashamed," he looked up at me and quickly away.

Long minutes of silence, and I asked, "Something you are doing? Or someone else?"

He shrugged and for more minutes seemed to be struggling to arrange the words. It was then that he told me, "There are six of them."

"Six of them," I reflected, not meaning to be Rogerian. "Six other boys?"

"No."

"Six what?"

Seeming on the verge of saying more, he answered, "That's all I can say."

He took a book out and showed me an English assignment he had said he would show me, completed for the day, and we left it at that.

But, needless to say, I was curious and looking forward to our next session scheduled a week away.

As it happened, he dropped by of his own accord after school that afternoon.

"Beer," he said without preliminaries and closed the door securely behind him. "What it is . . . Every week when my stepdad gets paid, when they buy groceries, they buy a six-pack, and they get drunk. Every Tuesday, it is. My folks make me and my little sister go to bed early, like nine or so, and they drink all six cans. I can't get to sleep, going to bed that early. And it really bothers me."

"What is there about it that seems to bother you most?" I asked.

"Well, it's bad. It's wrong for them to drink. Most people don't. Do you?"

"As a matter of fact, Barry, I don't drink. But most people do. And without getting into why some people do and some don't, I think that it is fair to say that your parents relaxing together with a six-pack once a week is nothing to be ashamed of. I don't know anyone who would think very badly of them or of you because of that."

"Really?"

"Really," I confirmed, making a quick note on my appointment pad. "I have a meeting, Barry. I'm putting you down to catch the last half of Fifth Period tomorrow."

"O.K." His face was bright and smiling, as though the weight of the world had lifted from him. However, by this same measure, it was back again when he arrived at my office the next day.

"It isn't that they drink," he led off. "It's the way they act when they get drunk."

I was still having difficulty seeing his parents drunk on just the one six-pack between them.

"It's what they do," Barry concluded. "They fight and kind of go crazy like."

"How do you mean? Do they hit each other? Or just argue?"

"It's not like that," he said, then stared past me for a time. "They go off into their room, usually. And then, it gets rough. Sometimes they swear, and they hurt each other. From what I can hear."

"From what you hear."

"I looked once. A little while. The door was open a little, and it was dark. Almost. First she was on top. Then him. And that time," the boy flushed. "That time it was summer and real hot, you know. This last summer, and they were naked. But that part of it didn't bother me. My big sisters are always running around with hardly any clothes on."

"Barry, tell me how things are between your parents the morning after these times. Are they mad at each other the next day? Any bruises, black eyes, or anything?"

"No," he smiled. "The next morning everything is all fine, like nothing happened. It's only when they get drunk."

"I am wondering, Barry, if it might be that your folks are not really fighting at all. Maybe they are just making love."

"They aren't making love," he declared. Then, immediately, without prompting, "She kissed him a few times, I think, trying to get him to stop. And then, maybe a couple, when they finally did."

"From what you tell me, it sounds like your parents are just doing what all married people do from time to time. Maybe it's just that you have happened on them when they were having sex."

"Oh," he bluffed, seeming to withdraw.

"Barry, do you know what the term *sexual intercourse* means?"

"I guess. Like fuck, and that."

"And you know what it means?"

"Everybody knows. I mean they talk, and make jokes. Other kids. I kind of go along. I'm maybe a little shy," he managed, shifting in his chair.

"Most people are a trifle shy or uncomfortable when it comes to talk about sex," I assured him. "But right now it is important that you understand a few things that might be related to what is going on. So I need to discuss the subject a little more with you. O.K.?"

"Sure."

"You know where babies come from," I said, more as a preface than a question.

"The sperm fertilizes the ovum and all that," he nodded.

"And you understand, in general, what happens in sexual intercourse."

"I guess so," he shrugged. "But maybe not really."

"Maybe not really."

"Don't laugh. We have all this stuff in Life Science. But I don't see where it is that the man puts it in."

"You know that girls do not have penises?"

"Cock," he said. "Penis is another word for cock or prick. Right?"

"Right."

"You're joking," he peered at me in disbelief a long moment. "They don't?" Then an expression of enlightenment crossed his face that I shall never forget. The thumb and forefinger of his right hand shaped an opening to be touched by a finger from his left. "They don't," he confirmed, more to himself. "They really don't."

It seemed impossible that he could be twelve, from a family with three girls, and not have known. The instance has been, to me, clear evidence of repression . . .

In due time, I gave him materials to read in one of our private conference rooms and, before and after, reviewed with him some of the more basic facts of life. The normalcy of his parents' behavior and of sex in general became increasingly accepted by Barry.

Soon after the fourth interview, one of his teachers stopped by to ask about him. I shared simply that he had a few normal concerns he was working his way through.

"Well," she told me, "he is a different boy all of a sudden. And completing his assignments. I don't know what you are doing, but keep at it."

Five years later I was assigned to the high school where he was then a senior. We greeted each other in passing one morning as he was waiting with a girl friend in the outer office to see one of my colleagues about a scholarship. Still in my line of sight from my office I heard him say, "There goes a hell of a counselor."

I glanced toward him, not quite sure what I had heard.

"You really fixed me up back in junior high," he said.

"Any credit is yours," I told him. "You put things together. And you've really been doing a great job in school."

"You helped," he said. "There when I needed it. Never forget you for it."

Not having heard many such comments, I was savoring it a bit while shuffling papers at my desk when I heard the girl ask softly, "What was that all about?"

"Well," he started. Then he laughed and said, "Forget it."

* * * * *

What is ***help?***

What is genuine help that can be recognized as such by any rational, intelligent person who might be asked to support counseling services and related programs?

The question still comes to mind. After all the college courses, the books by greater minds, and four decades of working closely with kids, we continue to reach out for answers. What is help through counseling?

Some things seem sure.

Help is listening. It is reflecting and letting counselees see themselves and hear what they have said. But not these things alone. It involves providing knowledge, ideas, information, and suggestions that experienced and trained adults are qualified and obliged to pass along.

Help is accepting counselees, where they are, as individuals. But it is not blindly believing and unreservedly trusting immature judgments. Part of it is understanding that people, young and older, do not always know the truth of their own situations and that, when they do, they are not always willing or able to share it with others.

We help by providing a nonthreatening, relatively confidential setting within which youngsters can talk freely with a caring and knowledgeable person.

In Barry's case, initially, he seemed able only to rationalize blame upon others for his failure in school. He seemed to be hiding the truth of his situation even from himself. Or more functionally conceptualized, he repressed a number of facts related to his problems, thereby keeping them from his conscious self. A non-threatening setting helped enable him to focus on what was consuming his attention and to share this, one layer at a time, with the counselor.

Although his case may not be typical in portions of content, in many respects it is quite typical of what happens in the best of school counseling.

Certainly, more times than not, students avoid revealing their most pressing concerns.

I recall a girl in her junior year of high school who was in for a routine interview to finalize her decisions of a course program for her senior year. We talked for forty-five minutes or so, reviewing standardized tests scores, past achievements, likes and dislikes, the colleges she was considering, and career possibilities, with the counselor suggesting a number of professional areas which seemed likely to match her potential and offer fulfillment beyond the less challenging field she said that she was planning.

I wish I had a recording of that session. It was a classic of what such interviews are supposed to be, right up to what I expected to be the close. At which point, as though it had taken all that had gone before to let it happen, we began.

"I'm going to elope tomorrow," she said. "I should have told you to begin with. I guess it was that you called me in and pressed the start button on all that other stuff. There are these games we play, you know." She was getting up to leave. "I'm sorry to take up your time."

"Would you like to talk some about tomorrow?" I asked.

"I don't know."

"Maybe it would make sense for us to give equal time to looking at the real world."

"Maybe," she laughed and plopped back down.

"Of course, much of what we talked about before was real. It's a matter of where you go from here . . ."

And after another forty-five minutes, she said, "But you didn't try to talk me out of it."

"Did you want me to?"

"No," she said. "No one could have . . ."

As it turned out, she did not elope the next day. She married the following summer and came back to school in the fall.

* * * * *

Another girl comes to mind, a brilliant ninth-grader who was referred by a number of her teachers, one a white-haired lady who retired that year.

No cause-and-effect relationship is inferred between the girl's behavior and the fact that the teacher had white hair and retired. I merely mean to note that it has not been just the chronologically younger teachers who sense the need for counseling services.

"At least get acquainted with the girl," the teacher asked of me, "and see what you think. I am sure she has the capacity of earning A's instead of D's. And her family has very high standards for her. I know them through our church . . . Her father and Gail used to be very close, and now it seems they hardly speak to each other. I imagine he has come down hard on her about the grades . . . I hope you have better luck trying to talk with her than I . . ."

Not only was it difficult to get the girl to talk at first, she would stand outside my office behind a pillar when I sent a pass for her. The first few times I had to go out and usher her in.

"Don't believe them," Gail told me after we had reviewed her standardized test scores and I had stressed the high ability and potential they suggested. "They aren't right. They're only tests."

"I am inclined to believe that these tests, given over a number of years, tell what you can do with greater validity than those you have taken in your classes lately. And the teachers I have talked with about your work agree with me."

"Those tests, in my folder, are all old and out-of-date, from before."

"Some are from last spring. All put you in the upper ten percent of your class."

"I can't do that stuff in Biology and Algebra. I can't."

"Can't," I said. "I never believe the word applies to you. Things are bound to be difficult when you let yourself get behind here and there. But you can . . ."

"I can't."

"And when you say that you can't, you may be right in the sense that there is a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's similar to the situation where people tell themselves that no one likes them, and when they go down the hall acting as though no one likes them, it turns out to be true."

"I do that, too," she interrupted, smirking at the floor.

"And in your classes," I plunged on, "if you behave as though you can't, then, I expect you will be correct. But you can. You really can do all the work asked of you in all of your courses, with high grades."

"I'm stupid," she said at times.

"You only act that way," I once responded.

"So you agree. I'm stupid."

"I don't agree."

"You said that when I act like I can't, I can't. So when I act stupid, I'm stupid . . ."

I once gave her a blank piece of paper, asking her to draw a person.

"A boy or a girl?"

"Whatever . . . "

She drew a tiny stick figure with a triangle skirt, about one inch tall in a lower corner of the page.

"Who is it?" I asked, after she had refused to draw a boy on the other side of the sheet.

"You know," she answered.

"Why?" I found myself asking, when I am devoted to avoiding the use of the word. "Why do you think you feel this way?"

"I don't just think I feel this way. I'm a nothing. Worse than a nothing."

When I tried to work with her on educational and career planning, she said she might be a dishwasher. Although, eventually, she did a fine written career exploration in the area of social services.

"I'm evil," she asserted, out of the blue. "You just don't know."

"So tell me."

"I did."

"You have never told me anything that suggests you are evil."

"I will."

"I doubt it."

"And when I do, that will be the end of it."

"The end of what?"

"The end of your thinking I am a nice, sweet, innocent girl and the whole thing," she said. "Do you want to hear?"

"Anything you want to tell me."

"I don't want to tell you. I haven't told anybody else, and I won't ever. And if I tell you, you have to promise that you won't either."

"You remember, Gail, the times I don't keep secrets. The two types of situations I spelled out before, where I am not allowed to keep confidences?"

"This is no life-or-death-threat thing. But you will probably think I am mentally ill and then have to tell my parents or a shrink."

"Not likely."

"Well," she sighed and, in a tight, small voice, began. "Well, there is this friend of my family. Friend of my father. A great, respected pillar in our church. Who used to be a second father to me. For as long as I can remember, he tells me how pretty I am—but I'm ugly—and that I am his girl. He might be my father, my real father, for all I know. I think my mother has a thing about him . . . But anyway . . . I was over at his house this summer. Everybody else had left . . . He offered me a Coke. And I followed him out to the kitchen . . .

"Do I have to go on?" she asked, not looking at me, now facing a quarter turn away.

"No," I told her. She sighed again, deeply, and I thought this was as far as she would go with her story. "It's completely up to you."

"I was sitting on the edge of the table," she continued, abruptly. "So it was my fault. But it was just that there was more breeze there . . . He was kind of in front of me . . . And we didn't talk. Hardly. Except when he asked me once if I wanted to leave . . . To go home . . . I didn't answer . . . He got up and closed the back door . . . And after awhile he touched me, again . . . "

"Touched you."

She carefully removed a piece of paper from her binder and drew another stick figure, larger than the other I remembered. This one, without the triangle skirt.

"Oh, you know where," she said and started tearing the paper into as many pieces as possible. "So . . . "

"So?"

"I let him do it. I did things to help him," she said. "He touched his fingers outside . . . Outside and in . . . And . . . And you want to know? I liked it." In contrast, she looked squarely in my eyes. "More then anything in my whole life. I won't ever admit it to anyone again. But I did. So now you know. I'm evil."

"Evil."

"Evil." She was looking away again.

"Having pleasurable feelings when being sexually stimulated is not evil, Gail. It's normal." I moved my chair to try to regain eye contact. "I am not saying that what happened should have happened, but—"

"I hate him," she said, seeming not to listen. "I keep going back again."

"You've gone back to see him?"

"But he won't have anything to do with me. He won't let me in the house. And I'm glad because I never want him to touch me again, anywhere," she said. "But sometimes I want it, and I know it was my fault it happened."

"Apparently, the man believes that you and he should not be doing such things with each other again."

"For sure."

"Do you agree?"

"Yes. I know we shouldn't. But I let him. And I went back. And now you know what a bad person I am."

"Gail, I don't see you as a bad person."

"But when I like things like that."

"You are being honest with yourself about your feelings. I would be more worried about you if you said you had no pleasurable feelings. But I hope you understand that sexual experiences will be much happier for you when the circumstances are different, when you don't have to endure such ambivalence," I told her. "You remember the word?" We had used it before in our discussions.

"Wanting and not wanting, at the same time," she verified. "And that is where it is. Back and forth, and at the same time. And like that, before I told you all this, I was sure that you would throw me out and tell everyone what a filthy slut I am, and all the time I knew you wouldn't. Even when I'm evil."

"I don't see you as evil."

"And crazy."

"And not crazy. Just a very normal, bright girl who has had something happen that complicates her life. An intelligent girl who is aware and more sensitive than most, who has superior ability to understand and accomplish things in this world, once she looks at herself as she is and stops saying she can't do things she can."

Gail's story has more to it, of course, but first came this beginning, this beginning of turning things around.

The acceptance of a caring person helped. A confidential setting in which she could realistically face her current situation helped. And she went on to be a very successful student throughout high school and college and, in time, a successful wife, mother, and professional.

* * * * *

Without question, any and all problems that students bring through the door are concerns of the school counselor. If we are going to help. Yet, occasionally, with various and devious motivations, voices suggest that the counselors of young people should somehow limit their attentions to so-called "school problems."

To which I am inclined to reply, "It continues to be my opinion that suicides and unwanted pregnancies have a way of interfering with study habits."

Turning a blind eye to the real and most pressing problems of counselees is a shameful, cowardly foolishness we cannot afford.

More on this in the next chapter . . .

A story my friend Ken Hoyt tells comes to mind. The last I heard, he still had a tape of the incident.

"And what would you like to talk about today?" the counselor asks the student at the beginning of the interview, or words to that effect.

"What I really want to talk about is finding a job," says the boy. "But if you want to talk about sex again, it's alright with me."

Dr. Hoyt, not long ago the Director of Career Education for the U.S. Office of Education, is appropriately devoted to the emphasis of his chosen field. It may be fair to say that he knows me as well as I know him and appreciates my devotion to the concept of *total person*. Little, if any, conflict exists between our views.

But I have often wondered if the boy in Hoyt's anecdote did, in fact, have a sexual problem he was trying to break to the counselor.

Admittedly, the other anecdotes in this chapter have been on the exceptional side. More common would have been stories of young people in extremely trying situations at home where school work and job preparation offered eventual solutions to their central dilemmas.

I am thinking now of more than a few young people who had serious problems related to sexual behavior, sometimes within the home and sometimes away. Sometimes home seemed intolerable and prompted them to run to greater trouble and despair. And the solutions always involved a long-range view of career preparation, of planning, and of utilizing the training opportunities available.

Once at a state association meeting, I expanded on the *total person* concept a bit beyond the patience of an illustrious professor who took delight in put-downs—a sort of Don Rickles, Ph.D.

"When I hear people expound on the total person," he said, "I wonder if they mean to include penises."

More reserved in those days, I will always think fondly of the nun on the panel who came smoothly to my rescue.

"Only in fifty percent of the cases, Dr. — — —," she said, then noted the importance of considering the spiritual aspect of individuals in their choice of careers.

There are many dimensions to the total person.

Not the least of these is life span or time, for example.

While necessary to recognize and to deal with immediate concerns, it is equally necessary to have an eye on the future.

That great *now* everyone keeps talking about has a way of being tomorrow and yesterday. Grasping this can make the difference in the lives of counselees and counselors alike.

In spite of or because of their problems, those who planned for better times to come, hung in there, and did the work of preparing for a career are now relatively happy, successful people. Those who did not are inclined to simply drift from one intolerable dependency to another.

The goal-directed counseling I favor has no quarrel with career education and prompting kids to get to work in school. Escapist, esoteric rap sessions offer little in the way of help.

Genuine help through counseling deals with both now and tomorrow. It recognizes that yesterdays were once todays and tomorrows and that, in time, yesterdays greatly determine what todays and tomorrows will be.

Help *begins* with a realistic acceptance of individual counselees within the setting of their lives.

Acceptance and, in turn, the capacity to help are very limited until the counselor knows *what's happening*.

Views of this can be quite different to different folks—counselors, counselees, and others. Some of the best reach out to try to *do* something on false assumptions.

Counselors, and others who wish to help, must have valid and adequate *functional orientations* in the areas of concern in which they work.

CHAPTER **TWO**

THEORY MAKES PERFECT

Or should that be the traditional "Practice makes perfect?"

Of course, neither makes perfect by itself. Both theory and practice are needed to get the job done. And here I mean to recognize that, too often, valuable guides to understanding and solving problems are ignored as "just theory."

This is a shameful loss we cannot afford.

The relationship between theory and practice is much the same as that between daydreaming and action. Nothing is wrong with theory and nothing is wrong with daydreaming per se. However, they are pointless if they do not prompt constructive action rather than simply fill the air with pompously disguised evasion.

Intelligent, orderly thoughts lead to accomplishment. Adequate functional orientations enable success in practice.

* * * * *

A folktale (I started years ago to make a point) tells of a boy who was crossing the Yellowstone River one cold winter day, when the ice broke beneath him, and he fell in.

Near freezing, he was hanging on to the edge with his fingernails, trying to keep from being swept under, when a teacher happened by and heard his frantic cries for help.

Now, this was a good teacher, a caring teacher. She heard him yelling, and she knew right off the boy had a problem and went to help. At considerable personal risk and discomfort, she went out there on that cold, cracking ice beside him, opened the text book, and assigned him Problems 93 through 104.

But he wouldn't listen, you know? This was one of those kids. We have them in every classroom. He didn't cooperate. Wouldn't even try.

As it turned out, this teacher had had a course in guidance somewhere, and she moved to another front. She tried reasoning with the boy about how important this subject was to his future. Still, he didn't try. Didn't do a single one of those problems, when the teacher knew perfectly well he could, if he would apply himself. And to top it off, he seemed to show no appreciation for what she was doing for him . . .

Or so the story goes.

And at this point, when I am telling it at a counselors' convention or the like, I usually add—

The thought has crossed my mind that the boy was lucky that it was a teacher that came by, and not a Rogerian counselor . . .

So much for made-up folktales, but much the same thing is happening across the country every school day, and it is a disgrace that more people do not see, understand, and take appropriate action.

I tell the story to adults, to try to make a point. And, a slightly different version, I tell to youngsters—with a person their own age, instead of a teacher, coming upon the scene, then going out on the ice to rap, mess around, and maybe share a joint.

More times than not, I slip into the story with students who indicate that they want to be counselors or social workers. I have been in this line long enough to suddenly see them as future colleagues, effective or ineffective, devoted to answering their clients' needs or simply their own felt needs. The guidance obligation at this point is more than to these becoming individuals but to the thousands with whom they will be working if they go into the helping professions.

"What do you think attracts you to this line of work?" I ask something of the sort.

"I want to help people," comes the usual response. And I don't know of a better statement of purpose.

"How?"

"What do you mean?"

"In what way? There are lots of ways to help people in this world. And lots of careers involved."

"I want to go into the poor neighborhoods in big cities," one ninth-grade girl told me, "and just talk with the people and let them know they are loved."

Recently, I talked with this same girl, now a woman. We recalled what she had said, and I told her what I had thought but left unspoken at the time. "Hon', with only talk and words of love to offer, they would eat you alive."

"They would have," she laughed, a bit more worldly and traveled than she had been ten years before, but distinctly headed for a career of working with young people.

Never have I attempted to talk anyone out of going into a career of helping. But I readily admit to prompting substantial consideration of what help to another human being can be.

In career discussions, it usually comes down to the answering of the needs of people. We help by answering the needs of people on various need levels.

And then, in these discussions, inevitably, comes the question of whether we should spend our time on answering the immediate needs that people feel or on answering the needs that objective third parties see for them in the longer run.

Of course, no choice should have to be made of one or the other. Neglecting a rational recognition of either means failure. Both immediate and future needs require attention in adequate counseling relationships. One step at a time, both the needs experienced now and those to be experienced tomorrow are indispensable areas of consideration.

And counselors should be functionally aware of the relationship of the two.

"What comes next?" I ask my counselees, and myself.

The boy in the icy Yellowstone River is not likely to feel the need to do Problems 93 through 104 as long as he remains in the river. Unless, I suppose, the teacher threatens, "This is the last time I am going to tell you. Now get to work or I am going to stomp your fingers and push you under."

The boy might give the problems a try if that happened. And there is some of that going on in well-intentioned attempts at helping kids today.

But as long as the boy is in the water, not much success can be predicted. He has needs that are more pressing. His attention cannot be expected to be on his schoolwork.

Just as true, however, is the other side of the coin. Once the boy is out of the icy water, safe and warm, without the threat to his survival, he will start to sense the higher needs. He will be able to focus on what the teacher is presenting and to see the worth of it all in answering his future needs.

To answer the needs of people is to create new needs within them, and this and its ramifications should be understood in depth by all who offer counsel.

This and the few other fundamental concepts reviewed in this book I believe should be a part of every counselor's functional orientations. They are basic, sound, and useful to anyone entering into counseling or any activity involving helping relationships—whether this be as a professional or simply as a parent or friend. They are not complex secrets to be hidden in the medicine bags of mystics.

Beyond their use in the basic orientations of counselors, they can and often should be passed along to counselees in the course of routine counseling.

HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

In the midst of World War II, A. H. Maslow put much of it down for us, as he saw it, in *Psychological Review.* And this tendency toward the interrelated order of needs became known as "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs."

Regrettably, the ideas expressed in his human motivation theory at that time were not understood and utilized to a greater extent in the years since. We might have a much happier, safer world. Certainly, we would have had a more rational view of the happenings and not been so disillusioned by the inevitable.

Consistent with my assertion that such basic concepts can be of significant value to teenagers, in one of my books addressed to them, *For the Time of Your Life*, I wrote—

> To help us understand the nature of needs in ourselves and in others, the psychologist A. H. Maslow pointed out that needs are arranged in a hierarchy, ranging from the most urgent bodily needs to the higher, acquired, psychological needs. That is, there is a sequence in which our needs are felt or become known to us. Our more basic needs must be satisfied before we can sense, to any great extent, the existence of others higher up the scale.

The first level in this hierarchy is our need for air, water, food, and other *physiological* necessities.

Next comes a need for *safety*. We all need a measure of security, but this comes after a relative satisfaction of our bodily needs. When we grow severely thirsty or hungry, we will risk our lives for water or food.

Next comes a need for *love*, attention, and belonging.

Next, *esteem* or self-respect, prestige, and recognized success.

Highest in the hierarchy, according to Maslow, is *self-actualization*—that is, the need for self-fulfillment, for becoming the most that we are capable of becoming. The majority of our academic school subjects are related to this level.

Some cases do not fit neatly into this sequence, but the tendency toward such order is always present. And in dealing with any problem involving needs, the concept of the hierarchy of needs should be taken into account.

The boy in the icy river does not see much point in doing schoolwork until his basic safety needs are met. Schoolwork has no meaning for him until he is out of the water, warm and dry, and sure he is going to live. A love-starved girl from a rejecting home feels her need for affection more strongly than her need for self-respect and a pure reputation.

The people of a country in dire need of food and other necessities of life are not concerned with their right to a democratic system of government until their basic needs are met. They may be expected to support that system which appears to answer their immediate needs. Bodily and safety needs require satisfaction before most people sense a need for dignity and political freedom.

But as surely as the higher needs are not felt until the basic needs are met, the higher needs *will* be felt when the basic needs have been met.

Once the boy is out of the river and knows he is safe and secure, he will see a need for schoolwork.

Once the girl finds sufficient love, she will care more about her reputation and her self-respect. Tragically, she may discover too late that the love she wants is linked with her reputation and her self-respect. She may find that her frantic strivings for love have worked against her, giving her only temporary satisfaction and robbing her of the lasting love that she later discovers she needs most.

The people with dire needs for basic necessities will want much more of life once these are satisfied. They will come to want a higher standard of living, the self-respect and dignity that go with independence, and a voice in their own affairs.

There is a lesson here for those who sincerely wish to help others, whether it be individuals helping other individuals or nations helping other nations. When we undertake to provide the basic necessities of life to people in need, we are foolish indeed to suppose that this will make them content and happy forever after. Other needs will rise to the forefront.

The future is predictable in this respect. We should consider beforehand what may be the next need to arise and how it may be satisfied. Certainly, the helping person or nation should not be so naive as to expect continued expressions of gratitude. With the new need for self-respect, the people may not want to admit or even remember that they ever had such a need for help.

It becomes apparent, then, that the needs we humans feel are determined as much by what we have as by what we do not have. By answering the needs of people, we create new needs within them, needs which can no more be ignored than the original basic needs.

If you grasp this concept, congratulations. Unhappily, most people do not. And neither do they act in concert with the dynamics at work here.

HOMEOSTASIS

When I used to teach formal classes in psychology to high school seniors, I led off by asking the huskiest boy in class to help me with an experiment in front of the room.

"The concept about to be illustrated," I told the class, "is the most important in the entire course. It is the foundation of understanding human relationships and human behavior."

"Now take a comfortable stance," I told the boy, clearing a desk or two back out of the way. "Try to make no unnecessary movements. But if you feel you have to change the position of your feet or body, do what you feel you have to do. Then hold your new position until you feel you have to change again."

With a measure of caution, discovering the strength of him, I proceeded to push him with well-spaced little shoves, from the side, the front, the back . . .

"See how stable he is when pushed from this angle." I pushed with some force from the side. "This obviously is not his weakness. But look," I said, showing my little finger. I pushed at his back with the one finger, and he tottered and moved the position of a foot to keep his balance.

After a few more pushes, enough to make the subject change his position another time or two, I mumbled a pensive, "Isn't that interesting? I wonder why he didn't fall down." Then, thanking the boy for his patience, I returned him to his seat.

At the board, I wrote the word "homeostasis" in big, bold letters.

"Homeostasis," I said, "is defined, for your notes, as ***the tendency of the body to maintain balance.*** A basic characteristic of all living beings is the predictable tendency to attempt to maintain balance in all ways.

"As to this informal experiment, the general response of the subject was absolutely predictable. We knew he would act to keep his balance. To be off-balance can be a threat to our very survival. When thrown off-balance in any way, we all react immediately to regain balance.

"Once in this little experiment, the young man who was the subject did not understand that he was permitted to move his legs. He fell all the way to the floor. Face down. But even in this case, he maintained balance, in his own way. He put out his hands and neatly cushioned his fall. He acted to protect himself.

"There is something else we knew would happen," I added after a brief pause. "Something not quite so obvious to an unthinking observer. He didn't like it. Sometime I'm going to shove the wrong person in this so-called experiment, and he is going to turn and bust me right in the mouth.

"Happily, today our subject was an intelligent gentleman who recognized it was all in the interest of science and he let me get away with it. But whether our subject today chooses to admit it or not, we know he felt like pushing back. It is no fun to have to stand in front of everyone and be pushed around. It is embarrassing enough to make a person downright angry."

FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION CYCLE

Consistent with the principle of homeostasis, when we get pushed, we feel like pushing back. When we are thrown off-balance or are blocked from having things the way we want them, we feel like striking back at the person who is to blame. Frustration tends to result in aggression.

Frustration is the state of being off-balance and blocked from having things the way we want them. ***Aggression*** is an act intended to cause injury—sometimes directed toward the source of the frustration and sometimes toward a hapless substitute.

Historically, Sigmund Freud, John Dollard, Neal E. Miller, and many others observed a cause-and-effect relationship between the two.

I recall a busy morning in a crowded hallway where I was talking with a teacher when, two rooms away, a tall boy lashed out, swinging wildly, a sharp pencil in his hand.

"George!" I barked, shattering the stereotype of soft-spoken counselor, suddenly again a sergeant in the paratroops. He froze, quaking, and retreated into a classroom.

A teacher, who knew the boy well, ushered a few students away from us as I sat in a student desk next to George in the far corner of the room.

"What was all that about?" I asked him when he had calmed down enough to talk.

"It has been an absolutely rotten morning," he began. Instead of starting with a rationalization of how someone else was to blame out in the hall, as would have been typical from most students, he said, "First, I miss my bus."

"No," he corrected, red-faced, grimacing. "First, my brother took my only clean socks." (Frustration) "I got on him a little, trying to get them back." (Aggression) "He told my mother I hurt him. I didn't hurt him." (Frustration) "I belted him one for that. Not hard." (Aggression) "And my mother came on strong and told me that just for that I could wait another month for the ten-speed." (Frustration) "And we get into a big argument." (Aggression) "*Then* I missed my bus. I got a ride with a neighbor part of the way and ran most of the rest. I'm making it, see? And then at my locker some guy tells me, 'Georgia, you need a shower.' " (Frustration) "I tell him to go to." (Aggression) "And somebody says, 'Georgie Porgie stinks.' And some girl kicks at me. For no reason. No kidding. I don't even know her, and she kicks at me." (Frustration) "That did it. I had to hit somebody." (Aggression)

"I was worried about that pencil in your hand."

"It just happened to be there. I didn't get anyone with it, did I?"

"No. But thanks for stopping when I suggested."

"Yeah," he smiled. "What happens now?"

"Tell me. Is it over?"

"All cool."

Cool because there was someone there to make it possible for George to unload a bit, rather than add to his frustration.

Frustration leads to aggression. Aggression leads to greater frustration; greater frustration to even greater aggression. Too often, seemingly no end exists to the cycle. No happy end.

When someone strikes out to offend and hurt another person, this aggression is frustrating to the other person who, in turn, may be expected to have the normal reaction of striking back.

All this and more came up for review in counseling sessions with George after the hall incident.

Admittedly, an animalistic joy is generated in lashing out and drawing blood in a moment of revenge. But pain of retaliation, long-term punishment, and shame are the usual consequences. Control of our aggressive impulses is a logical price we must pay for civilized, group living.

Frustration in life is inescapable. The basic urge to be aggressive when we are frustrated is also inescapable. But raw acting-out is not irresistible for normal, healthy, mature people.

Of course, we must recognize that severely frustrated people abound in this world, people who are far from having things the way they want, people who are repeatedly blocked from reaching their goals. And as a consequence, many people are constantly caught up in the cycle, hair-triggered and set to be explosively aggressive at the slightest additional frustration.

Failure to understand and cope with the frustration-aggression cycle contributes to much of the misery on earth. The problems of name-calling, prejudice, crime, war, and even lovers' quarrels have roots here. Minor problems fireball into catastrophes because of our lack of ability to arrest this vicious cycle. Things being as they are, we have continuing need for increased support for institutions and services designed to head off trouble and break the cycle in various aspects of life.

The best argument I know for having counselors in every junior high and high school is that they head off trouble. In a school with an adequate counseling staff, kids have a way out when they feel they are near exploding, a way of letting off steam without making their problems worse.

Talking things out in a confidential setting with an accepting counselor breaks the cycle by preventing the additional frustration which otherwise would result from open aggression.

And talking things out is more healthy than trying to keep aggressive feelings bottled up inside . . .

* * * * *

SELF

We have all heard of acts of generosity and heroism described as "a giving of the self," as though some precious part of a person had been given up at a terrible loss to the self. But to portray such admirable behavior as "unselfish sacrifice" is poor logic. It tends to keep us from a clear and functional view of what is going on.

A more sensible approach, to me, is to recognize that generosity and heroism are very much in the interest of the self.

The self of a generous and courageous person has developed beyond the pettiness we commonly call "selfish." This self has grown to a level of maturity, intelligence, and greatness where it senses the interrelationships of the people of the world, where it feels concern, and where it experiences love.

Many people suppose the self to be little more than that which they see reflected in the mirror. But as a part of the functional orientations of counselors of young people, it is much more.

It includes everything we think we are—whether we are what we think we are or not. To a great extent, it is what we need to believe we are.

It includes a number of things we tend to view as separate and apart. It includes our clothes, our political party, our beliefs in what sort of world this should be, our religion, our loved ones, and more. It includes every person, thing, and idea we care about.

The girl who rescues a child from drowning and the boy who volunteers to work for the Crisis Center care about others and receive satisfactions from their services. Teachers and counselors, even though they may feel higher salaries are justified, value what they are doing and commonly stay on.

Caring and concern determine whether or not something or someone is a part of the self.

And while caring, without cause to apologize for the fact, we work to enhance and protect the self—collectively, all those things, people, and ideas we care about. If any part of the self comes under attack, we muster forces to defend it.

We react to a threat to the self much as we react to a threat to our physical survival.

We will try to avoid being degraded in front of our peers as surely as we would try to avoid a thug with a knife. This is true, whether we are kids in the school yard or adults at a professional meeting. Regardless of age, being forced to view ourselves as less than we want to be is a very painful experience.

Of course, the awesome threats and damages to self-image do not always come from someone else. Sometimes we are the culprits. Sometimes we do things which are completely out of line with what we want to be.

Although ***anxiety*** is commonly used to describe our state when we are experiencing a threat to the self, perhaps a more functional view is that ***anger, fear,*** or a combination of both will result. And when it is *we* who are doing the threatening, anger and/or fear are directed inwardly against ourselves or, with distorting rationalizations, outwardly against other people as we try to protect ourselves from the truth of who is actually to blame.

Remember Gail, from the first chapter? To be angry with ourselves and bent on self-punishment or to be afraid of ourselves is a tragic state of affairs—as is being unjustly angry and fearful toward others.

Quite obviously, we should avoid doing things which are in conflict with what we want to be. But the world is such that this is not always possible. And the various ideas, attitudes, loyalties within the self are not always consistent and in concert with one another. When we do right by one, we may do wrong by another.

We have more than one role to play, and the expectations of different groups vary. At one time, with one group, we may feel we want to be one person, and at another time with a different group, we may feel we want to be another.

So here we have something else to guard against—letting ourselves get bogged down with unresolved conflicts within the self.

CONFLICT

I wrote a story once called "The Point of Return." It was published in a teenage magazine and was the only story I ever wrote that received bad mail from readers who did not like the ending.

The basic plot I had seen dozens of times in high school. Girl meets boy. Boy has a bad reputation. But girl discovers he is a "sweet kid," underneath it all. She sets out to turn it all around. In time, she discovers that he is bent on turning her around instead.

Her conflict is one of ***approach-avoidance.*** She is ***ambivalent.*** She wants to get closer but at the same time wants to get away.

In the moment of truth, the girl asks to be taken home. Refusing, the boy bluffs it out with her and hands her a coin to call her dad. She takes it, and walks away.

In real life, the stories I have seen grew much worse before getting better.

Research psychologists Dollard and Miller offer significant theory in conceptualizing the dynamics in play here. They point out that when the intensities of the desire to approach and of the desire to avoid are plotted on a graph, both are shown to increase as the subject nears the goal object, but the desire to avoid has a steeper gradient. That is, the desire to avoid rises more sharply than the desire to approach. In an approach-avoidance conflict situation, the two gradients cross each other, and beyond that point of intersection the desire to avoid rises above the desire to approach.

In reaching out for solutions to approach-avoidance conflicts with counselees, I often rough out this graph between us.

With goal objects of unaffordable cars, doomed love affairs, or drugs, some grasp the meanings more quickly than do others. But referring to the graph has helped many students to think toward solutions in what before seemed hopelessly confused situations.

Using it to review what is happening in the common example of the girl attracted to a boy who is not right for her: From a distance, she is attracted to him, and the approach gradient begins. It rises as she approaches and the attraction increases. But then the avoidance gradient rises sharply, as she learns that when she goes out with him, trouble results. Each time she knows it is all wrong and wants desperately to get away. And, after a time, she feels the attraction again. A glance at the plotted gradients suggests that, things being as they are, the answer is to get away and keep away. The less she has to do with him, the less she will sense the desire to approach . . .

The existence of conflicts is not unusual, of course. They are a normal part of everyday life. They can hinder and limit, but they are not all bad. We can learn and grow as we strive for resolutions. And as we do, our capacity for deeper feelings and insight increases. We gain the perspective necessary to decide what we value most in our lives.

UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOR AND PERCEPTION

"It was just floating. The newspaper was hanging there in the air," the man said after the demonstration. "Until you stepped over and took hold of it."

"I was holding it all the time," his friend told him. "You only thought it was floating because you couldn't see me."

"There must have been a string or something," said the man, who had been hypnotized a few minutes before, now confused and unable to believe what his friend had told him.

This instance was the first time I had seen an example of post-hypnotic suggestion and, to me, jolting evidence of the existence of the unconscious.

The hypnotist had told the subject that upon resuming his normal, conscious state he would not be able to see his friend, until he heard the cue, "Zero," at which time he was to slap his friend on the back. He was brought to a conscious state and shown a newspaper. He examined it—nothing unusual about it. The hypnotist handed the paper to the subject's friend to hold out in front of him. And for the next few minutes, the subject tried to figure out what was making the paper "float in the air."

Suddenly, the cue, "Zero," and, startled, he saw his friend there holding the paper and slapped him on the back.

When asked why he had slapped his friend, he said, "Because he played this trick on me . . . "

A common demonstration. I saw my first in 1944. Millions of people have seen such happenings offered as entertainment at county fairs and the like.

Still, we tend to assume that behavior is always determined by conscious free will, supposedly guided by reason and logic. Even in courts of law, and certainly in the classrooms, we persist in the idea that we perceive accurately, act deliberately, and know why we do all that we do.

This is a convenient idea, to be sure. It holds that each of us is responsible for what we do, and I for one would like to see more people accepting responsibility for their actions in this world. And I encourage the use of free will, in place of blindly following the crowd.

But the truth remains that what we do is determined by more than conscious free will. A vast and active part of us influences our behavior, of which we are more or less unaware.

To one degree or another, our perceptions may be distorted and our true motivations kept from our awareness, especially when related to our needs to enhance and protect the self.

We protect the self by more than conscious fight and flight reactions. We ***autistically restructure*** the world and the self in our imagination, unconsciously altering our perceptions and our recollections to answer our felt needs. We ***repress*** threatening material, pushing it down and away from the awareness. We ***rationalize,*** unconsciously using our intelligence to support what we do, rather than using intelligence to determine what we do.

This is not to suggest that all of the people are dominated by unconscious impulses all of the time. But unconscious defense mechanisms come into play in most life-problems situations, and should be recognized in—though not necessarily revealed to—those we try to help through counseling.

A counselee involved in a ***reaction formation,*** for example, believing on the conscious level the opposite of what is felt on the unconscious level, should not be taken simply at face value. An activist shouting ***love*** when underneath it all is feeling ***hate*** requires cautious understanding.

And here, this chapter of practical theory has grown quite long enough . . .

If it has seemed elementary, great! I'd like to think this means it is understandable.

Please know that I am reaching for a collection of functional orientations that can be shared. Not something with which to impress or shut out. But something that can provide a common base of understanding amongst professional colleagues, our counselees, and those others who have interest and reason to grow along with us. Something that I not only understand but always remember, because it has application each and every day.

Infinitely more exists, of course. What I am reaching for here is a suggested base on which to build.

CHAPTER **THREE**

ECLECTIC ALL THE WAY

My first formal schooling in counseling spoke of ***directive*** and ***non-directive*** or ***client-centered*** approaches—associating E. G. Williamson with *directive* and Carl Rogers with the other.

Williamson told us that it was not enough to help people be what they suppose they want to be, but that we should help them be what they *ought* be. And this made sense, if we could figure out what it was they ought to be.

But this was an authoritarian approach and not at all novel or mystical.

As an alternative, some greeted the developing tenets of client-centered therapy with an enthusiasm akin to devotion. Consistent with traditional rebellion against established authority, many asserted belongingness to the belief that counselors should simply let the bud unfold, without fertilizer and all that other old-fashioned, sticky stuff.

Some grasp and utilized the non-directive, reflective approach. And some used it as an esoteric bluff, to rationalize that the counselor owed nothing but time—no knowledge, no guidance, no growth or expansion of self beyond what supposedly came from within the individual client, ignoring all the other external influences constantly determining what this might turn out to be.

I recall sitting in a class at Berkeley in the '50s, listening to silence on a recorded interview, silence that continued for over forty minutes, while the recorded counselor-in-training merely accepted the client's reluctance to respond.

Frankly, I felt I had better things to do, knowing that we counselors-in-training were required to type typescripts of our interviews in this advanced course, a fact that substantially influenced technique—the less talk, the less typing.

Still, I favored reflecting the statements of counselees, whenever appropriate. I believed it to be crucial to minimize threat in enabling counselees to more realistically see themselves. And I found that I was actually more Rogerian than many who vigorously professed to be.

Seeing worth and occasional foolishness on both sides, I was elated to learn from Blanche Paulson, then a counselor in the Chicago Public Schools, that counselors did not have to join one true faith or the other but could be ***eclectic*** and use the best of what Williamson, Rogers, and other teachers had to offer. I found that we could use whatever worked, even if we could not recall from whom the ideas came, and, even if by chance, these might have evolved in our thinking without us having read or heard them from greater minds.

In later years, I discovered that textbook writers and career-theorists are people. This, of course, I should have already known, but it took sitting across the table from them at the national professional leadership level for this realization to come plodding through.

And more, with the swinging pendulum came such a reversal of the reverence we once held for leaders that many of us slipped to not even giving them credit for that, for being people.

Respect for authority and established leadership dwindled in every phase of American life.

The drug insanity grew and mingled with the search-for-self cults. Chemicals we formerly *believed induced* schizophrenic states became popularized mechanisms of escape, rationalized as avenues of self-discovery, titled, "mind-expanding drugs."

Popularized contradictions continue to abound . . .

Without assertions of total synthesis, I will settle for the hope that my suggestions are not too much in conflict with each other and that something here and there will make sense to most of you, something that will fit and can be used to help.

WORKING IT OUT

The styles and procedures of school counselors are determined by our temperaments and circumstances much more than by our formal training or the counseling theories available. Graduate-level instruction and professional writings make worthy contributions. But after all is said and done, most practicing counselors size it up, hear what the bosses expect to be done, look at the number of students assigned, discover the time limitations, and strive to make it through the year.

Work it out enough to hang on tends to be the rule on the job.

The first year is bound to be imperfect, the rationalization goes. Procedures worked out to get by are seen as temporary, to be improved upon the next time around.

But once something has been worked out, even with glaring shortcomings, it is seen somewhere on a continuum, ranging from best-that-can-be-done to good-enough-for-now, considering the load, the time pressures, the imperfections of the total system, the less-than-professional wage being paid, and the lack of encouragement to try to do things better anyway.

That which is worked out in graduate training which fits and can be used to advantage on the job is applied and retained. That which does not seem to fit and meets with resistance is likely to be discarded as idealistic, impractical theory.

Unfortunately, some of that which is discarded might have saved the day, had it been applied.

Something breaks down along the way.

Either counselors do not always have opportunities to apply what is learned, or they did not learn it in the first place.

Or, perhaps, the bosses are the ones who did not learn it in the first place, and the counselors became threatened people who acted normally, if not commendably, rationalizing away what they had been taught by their counselor trainers, in order to survive.

In any event, I do not see school counselors simply being taught counseling theory in college and implementing it in schools. Usually, the theories and training do not quite mesh with the requirements of the job, and counselors reach out for the so-called *practical* with which to both help students and get from one end of the school year to the other.

In the process, let me note, I do not buy the assertion that ideas must come from within the individual counselor for them to be accepted and used to advantage. I reject this along with the assertion that all valued ideas must come from within the counselee during counseling.

To be utilized, ideas must become a part of us, of the ***self,*** but not necessarily have come from within us.

Prompting people through committees to dream up their own ideas, or the deception of trying to make them think that they have, may be one way to get people to accept something, even a mass of borrowed who-knows-what with a multitude of copies to satisfy a government grant. But such is not the only way.

Openly sharing understandable ideas which answer genuine needs is one better.

The thinking people I choose to call professional recognize sound ideas and make use of them.

And with the assumption that those who have stayed with the book this far are thinking people—professionals in orientation—regardless of position or extent of training, let me share a few more ideas that have evolved in effective practice as I have experienced and observed.

TO START WITH

"Fine," the student answers, sitting down beside the counselor's desk. Or, "I don't know."

The most common initial responses in the world are "Fine" and "I don't know."

Both are evasions, more times than not. At best, they are amenities.

What makes them both significant, of course, is that they are beginnings.

Effective counseling does not start with the pretentious announcement of some authored approach to counseling. It starts with a student coming through the door—literally, through the doorway of the counselor's office, or figuratively, anywhere the student and the counselor come together and start to talk.

Counseling starts with something as unimpressive as a counselor saying, "How are things going?" And a student saying, "Fine."

It starts with a kid the counselor has never seen before bursting into the office and pronouncing, "Hey, do you keep secrets? Because you'd better. And I got to tell somebody. And if this ever gets out—"

It starts with a student saying, "Can I get a schedule change from one of my classes?" And the counselor asking, "Tell me more about it. What's happening?"

It starts with an exchange between counselor and counselee in which they start to view "What's happening?" They—we—communicate and start to look at how things are, together. Sometimes with one taking the lead. Sometimes, the other.

It starts differently with different students in different situations—but much the same.

"How are things going?"

"Fine."

"Fine," I reflect, knowing there are school concerns that are not quite fine.

The student looks away, knowing much the same.

"Ms. Simon mentioned that you are having a difficult time in her class. Assignments incomplete or not turned in . . . What's happening?"

"I don't know." Which translated might mean, "I'm so fuzzed-up right now, I don't know for sure what you are asking me." Or, "I am deaf and didn't hear you." Or, "I don't like you and just want the heck out of here." Or, "I need more time to think about your question." Or, "I'll be in more trouble if I tell you." Or, "Keep asking. We both might find out." Or, any one of lots of other things, including, "I don't know."

"What kind of grades are you getting now?"

"I don't know."

"What was the grade you earned on your last test paper?"

"I don't know. About a D. I guess."

"About a D." I say. delighted to hear something beyond "I don't know."

"Maybe an F. I don't know."

"What are you studying? What are you on right now in class?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"Yeah."

"You don't know what's going on around you?"

He shrugs. a variation of the theme.

"Well. I guess. this gives us some hints as to why you may be having trouble in class." I might say. pensively. "Do you know what is going on here. right now?"

"Yes."

"You do." I have reflected. and found marked changes at this point.

"I know what's going on around me. We're on Chapter 12 in class. Doing the problems at the end of the chapter."

"I'm not right up on what that means. What sort of problems are they?"

"I don't know what they call them."

"Show me." I might say. moving a piece of paper in front of him . . .

Not all counselees are that resistive. Some are more so. But the first step is to get into motion.

The beginning is the beginning, trying to move from an exchange of near-empty words to a realistic picture of what is happening.

DEFINING THE SITUATION

After listening and reviewing the facts at hand, the question often still remains. What's going on? What is really happening here?

Once a counselor and a counselee have captured similar imagery and are looking at the same situation, even though from somewhat different vantage points, counseling is underway. Much of what goes on is a matter of defining situations, one at a time, then revising and expanding these definitions, in search of mutually acceptable, satisfying truth.

Part of the shaping of definitions comes from what counselees have to say, as the interviews and/or relationships develop. But part of it comes from the counselors, from the counselors' expertise and background.

Nothing magical or pretentious here, but indispensable nonetheless.

While counselees must have ample opportunity to talk, to say how they feel, to think things through out loud, it must not be assumed that all the ideas and information to be used in developing solutions to problems must or can come from within counselees.

Also worthy of note is that the ideas and information held by counselees did not originate there within the counselees in the first place.

Counselors, with their advanced education, expertise, experience, and training have an obligation to offer input, which should be considered (at least by the counselors) to be of worth and probably of superior value compared to that already introjected by the counselees from the media and peers.

While counselors should not try to force their ways of thinking onto counselees, they should not conceal them either.

Healthy relationships involve a homeostatic balance of give and take. Counselors both listen and speak. They care enough about their counselees to listen. They care enough, also, to speak and to pass along ideas and points of view they believe may help.

I recall a student coming in from junior English, a class then taught by an exceptionally capable and experienced lady in her later years.

"I guess I am supposed to go to the office, or maybe leave the planet," he started. "But if you have a minute?"

"Sure," I nodded, as he stretched his eyes open wide, shook his head, and sat down beside my desk.

"We were reading Poe in Mrs. Henderson's," he said. "And she and I get along good enough. We did anyway . . . But there was this part about a graveyard and the dead, right out of horror movies, you know. And I laughed. I laughed a little. That's all. And Mrs. Henderson blew up and told me to get out, for no reason that I could see."

"What did she say?"

"Oh, something about not having respect for the dead. And I told her I had respect for the dead, but this was just a dumb story. Why would she get so excited about me laughing at that?"

"I wasn't there, Chuck, and I may be off the track," I told him. "But from what you tell me, I suspect this is something you may have to be understanding about. At times in life you find that people have some touchy things in their backgrounds that make them more than a little sensitive in certain areas."

"Yeah. Well, I'm more than a little sensitive right now about being chewed out in front of the class for nothing."

"Even so," I said, "I think you can handle what I am going to share with you about Mrs. Henderson and treat it with discretion. It's no secret, but I will have to ask you to never bring it up with the lady herself. Alright?"

"O.K."

"Way back, actually before I was born, Mrs. Henderson lost her husband in a terrible accident. She has never remarried. I'm told she and her husband were very close. The story goes, once when they were taking a trip, while she was driving, the brakes went out going down a steep hill. An oil-drilling truck was in front of them. They collided, and a pipe went through the windshield, and through her husband there beside her . . . "

"Hoh," said the boy, more to the trees beyond the windows of my office. "So what's going to the office? . . .

* * * * *

The wider view of *what is happening* and what is influencing behavior is vast and many-faceted. Feeling compelled to grasp the infinity of it all is overwhelming and self-defeating, but often, counseling must go beyond what may be apparent at first glance.

Counselors must attain an adequate orientation and knowledge of the setting in which their counselees are expected to function. To be effective in a school setting, they must have a realistic view of the staff members with whom the students are required to relate.

Beyond a thorough knowledge of the course offerings available, they must have a general understanding of what each course will involve and a recognition of the staff competence, temperament, and orientation emphasis.

For example, students lacking inclination to participate in sports may tend to lack productive relationships with those staff members whose primary orientation is in this general area . . .

Counselor trainers cannot be expected to provide this indispensable background necessary to be effective. Removed from the actual settings in which most school counselors work, they are limited in the practical help they can offer trainees in providing the descriptive specifics of the educational environment in which students are expected to function and find satisfaction of personal needs. And some of my college-level colleagues lack tolerance when being subjected to consideration of this area. They resist focusing on the day-to-day details of the job.

Counselors must find the initiative and sustained desire to seek out and realistically define all aspects of the school and community environment.

Adequate functional orientations must exist, including a mastery of the concepts suggested in the previous chapter and substantial extensions of same.

NO 90-DAY GUARANTEES

Calling on the concept of homeostasis, it might be functionally viewed that a person with a problem has something out of balance. Then what follows is that the solution can be found by discovering what that something is and adjusting the individual's behavior and/or environment so that all is relatively level again.

The approach is rational—define the situation, determine what is out of balance, and take action to bring things back in balance again.

Of course, as with all attempts at generalizing, this is an oversimplification.

The adjusted, level, balanced state amongst living things is by nature a temporary condition, if in fact it is ever really achieved.

Life would be boring beyond imagination if we never hungered, angered, exerted, and sensed the challenge to achieve. Much of what people do is designed to create new problems, to throw things out of balance, to experience excitement, to enjoy the strivings and anticipation, and to find new and better ways.

To a very great extent, the young people with whom school counselors work seemingly lack purpose in much that they do. They are so drawn along aimlessly by the supposed will of the crowd. Here, the homeostatic tendencies at work seem only to say, "Stay in balance with the other kids around you and with what the media keeps screaming this is meant to be." To do otherwise means rejection, defacement, loneliness, and vague perils of the jungle.

And when they attempt to stay in balance in one aspect of their world, they are thrown off balance in other dimensions. Inconsistencies and contradictions confuse even the most conscientious. Straight-line, correct, totally rational solutions are seldom available.

Presently, society gives young people things for which the user should be personally responsible but for which they cannot be.

Millions are driving cars, for example—some asserting they have paid for them themselves, while living at home and not even contributing to their own livelihood. Millions drive unnecessarily, consuming energy important to their future survival, adding to inflation and a dooming lack of international balance of trade. They are in no way prepared to cope with accidents that occur or with the procreative activity stimulated by the instant privacy and relative isolation made possible by their use of cars.

On every front they are led to believe that they have rights, rights that are somehow forever theirs, inherently, without obligation even to those who made the brief gifts possible. Constantly, they are drawn into activity for which they cannot rationally be expected to be responsible.

They are told that rules are more strict for them than for their elders. But they observe and discover punishment is more lenient or nonexistent for them when they break the laws.

And after having learned to receive and enjoy without related responsibility, they rebel at adults who express shock at their irresponsibility . . .

And through it all, counseling cannot be expected to be a fix-it shop with a 90-day guarantee, as some demand that it should be.

Counseling helps people—developing human individuals in a world of contradictions and change. It helps them make wise decisions regarding the problems at hand.

But consistent with the concept of the hierarchy of needs, no final, satisfaction-forever-after solutions can be provided.

The answering of the needs of people creates new needs within them.

After attempting to facilitate change, it behooves us to look around and see the total picture of what is happening as a result.

Better yet, we should make an educated guess as to the result before the change. Questions need to be discovered and asked in advance.

Will the need that prompted the previous behavior persist? If not, what will be the new need and consequent behavior? Or, if it may be expected to persist, what may be expected to answer the need in the future?

CHANGES

"Do I have to keep enduring this girl's behavior?" an eighth-grade teacher came down during her prep period and asked. "Jean is rude and defiant and I am tolerating behavior that I have never tolerated before. And I am starting to have difficulties with the other students because of it. Now, I know she has serious problems. But I have my own . . ."

I assured her that the girl's need for understanding and special consideration did not mean that she should be allowed to violate rules of conduct required of other members of the class. The teacher then discussed the girl's behavior with the principal, and he, in turn, dealt quite sternly with the girl.

"I don't know what you and the principal said to her," the teacher reported two weeks later. "But she has certainly cleaned up her act in my class. I'm having no trouble at all with her now . . ."

And the same day, another teacher stopped by.

"Is there something I should know about Jean?" he asked me. "She has always been just a little lady with me, until about two weeks ago. And then, for no reason that I could see, she started being as nasty to me as she could be. Now, I know the girl has home problems. But what has changed so that now I am getting all this trouble from her?" . . .

Some youngsters, at least temporarily, seem to have to have someone to hate, a scapegoat, an outlet for their frustrations.

Changes in behavior are sometimes prompted by changes in needs. But sometimes, as apparent in this example, no real change occurred at all . . .

Trying to make sense out of such happenings when I teach psychology, I take a balloon, partially filled with air, and squeeze it, first one place and then another, noting that the air contained does not disappear because I squeeze. The pressure merely causes a change in shape and moves the air somewhere else. I also note that if enough pressure is applied, if enough hands squeeze at the same time, an explosion is inevitable.

WHAT DO THEY NEED?

Part of defining the situation at hand is determining what is needed. Of course. And what do our student clients need?

They don't really *need* anything, we may be inclined to say. They have their basic needs satisfied better than any other generation in the known history of the world. And they have luxuries and leisure diversions in as great a measure. But they still *need* as much as ever.

"I need a schedule change." Every counselor hears variations of this one. Over and over. "I can't *stand* that teacher! She's always out to get me. I hate her."

"You really hate her," I reflect . . .

"I hate her." Once more with feeling. "I hate her, I'm telling you. I need out. You gotta get me out!'

"I'm not the decision-maker around here on schedule changes," I clarify. "But I usually know what it takes to get a change through. Let's talk a bit more on where we are on this one."

"I need out."

"Maybe you will get out. Maybe you won't. But tell me what's going on."

"Well . . . " Deep, gasping sigh. "It ought to be a big, sacred secret, but it isn't. I finally started making it with a boy. I mean, not all the way and stuff. But I have this boyfriend. And he's really got it for me, the same, you know. And she starts trying to mess it up . . . She has no right to be getting into it. And she's been talking to my parents and telling them all these weird things about me starting to get wild and that I shouldn't get my car. I hate her . . . "

An equalizer is evident at work amongst all people. It is that we tend to act in a similar manner when our felt needs are not being met—regardless of where the needs may be on the scale from innate-biological to learned-actualization. The youngster in school who is starved for attention, love, and affection tends to react as urgently as the one starved for food. And those who feel they simply must have a car can be as demanding as those lacking clothes on a cold day.

To a much greater extent than is supposed, the counselor in a school in a well-to-do section of town and the counselor in a school in a low-income section will find students reacting to their frustrations in much the same fashion. In fact, the counselor in the well-to-do section may have a more difficult time maintaining patience because of the seeming irrationality of it.

Certainly, the needs that kids feel are not the same needs that their teachers and parents feel for them. One of the most common mistakes we can make is to suppose that kids need what we, in our experienced wisdom, believe they should have.

Need fulfillment can come from not turning in homework, for example.

Commonly, we assume that when students fail to do their assignments, the reason is a matter of habits and inertia. Then with a routine review of the facts and of the normalcy of the problem we indeed share in trying to make ourselves get down to work, the student exerts a bit more and gets the assignments in. The teacher smiles. The student feels good, does more, and feels better about him/herself. The grades go up. The student likes the class more. The teacher comes to like the student more . . . All gets better. It is a positive cyclical sequence of events.

But sometimes the routine does not get the job done, suggesting cause to look more deeply.

Failure in school can be success in terms of the needs experienced by some youngsters in some situations. And success can be failure.

I saw a T-shirt the day of this writing that read, "Don't get mad. Get even."

In terms of their own need structures, some youngsters we have in school are clearly concerned with getting even more than with achieving academically. And often, on the conscious level, they do not realize the direction of their motivation.

It takes sorting out.

CHAPTER **FOUR**

FIGURING IT OUT—TOGETHER

"It's never my job to get after anybody," I often say to students who know they have been referred to me because they are not doing well in their schoolwork. "It *is* my job to try to figure out what is going on."

Then we review the poor work slips, copies of which have been sent my way, and recognize current difficulties in class . . .

And after the student has had a turn at telling how things are from his or her point of view, we try to size up abilities on the basis of past achievement and test scores from the folder.

"Now keep in mind that we should put the emphasis on the *high* scores," I am very likely to say. "The high scores seldom happen by accident. The lower scores, more often. All sorts of things could account for low scores. You might not have felt well when you took the test. You might have put the right answers on the wrong lines. Lots of things . . . But there are only two things likely to account for the higher scores. Either you are smart, or you sat next to somebody who is smart.

"In your case I'm sure it is that you are smart. Certainly, you are smart enough to be getting much better grades in school." During the saying, I reach for a piece of paper.

"Now suppose this represents all the students in school," I say, drawing a horizontal line. "With the smartest over here at this end, and with the ones who find school work just about impossible over here, at this end. On the basis of the tests, your past grades, and what your teachers say about you, I would guess that you would be getting grades over, right about here." I scribble an area on the horizontal line.

"But at present, your grades are over here." Another scribble . . . "Now, that," I draw a line between the two, "that distance, that difference, does not happen by accident. With an average amount of effort, it is reasonable to expect that you would be achieving up here. Instead, your grades are over here. What do you make of that?"

"I don't know," is the most typical response. But sometimes, it is a simple, smiling, "I guess I better get to work."

"That should take care of it," I am able to say if they commit themselves to get to work. And we take it from there . . .

But if the answer is an evasive, "I don't know," I say, "I don't know either," leaving the mystery still before us, instead of immediately suggesting more work and pat plans of action . . .

"If an average amount of attention and energy was being applied," I review, "your grades would be up here. But they aren't. Then, I guess, it is reasonable to suppose that some of your energy and attention is just not being applied to your studies. Does that make sense?"

"I guess."

"How have you been feeling? . . . Have you been sick? Missed any school due to illness? . . . Are you getting enough sleep? . . ."

If everything seems "fine" on the health front, I move on to the recognition that everybody daydreams and finds it hard to get down to work at times.

"When you daydream, are you off on happy things or unhappy things?" I ask. And then we talk a bit, exploring the answer . . .

"What do you do for a good time? What's fun for you? What do you like to do?" I get around to asking, and the answers are always enlightening . . .

"Do you have a lot of outside activities that take much of your attention and energies? Any part-time jobs? . . . "

The counselor contributes, sometimes guiding and even probing. But counseling is something done together.

We look at things together. We seek solutions and better ways, together.

FACE FACTS

"I'm really trying in there," it often goes. "I'm getting my work done. Most of it."

"You really feel you are doing most of the work required. Enough to pass."

"Sure. That teacher just has it in for me."

"I'm having a difficult time understanding," I say, glancing at the papers in front of me. "Because your teacher handed me these. I went to him after we talked last, as we agreed I would. And, frankly, I found myself kind of on the spot. I was acting on the assumption that you were doing more than this."

"Well, I don't catch on to what it is I'm supposed to do in there."

"The teacher assures me that he is willing to give you extra help and has asked you to come in before and after school whenever you have questions or need extra time."

"I don't like to go in. We don't like each other."

"It would be strange if you two did, under the circumstances. He is trying to get you to work. And you aren't doing what you can do. The solution, at least part of it, is for you to get extra help for awhile and climb back on the track. When you earn better grades, which I am sure you can, you will feel better about him. And certainly, he will feel better about you . . .

"Tell me," I ask, when papers are in my hand. "What was this about? What was this assignment? . . . Do you think it was too hard for you?" And we get down to specifics.

Better than confronting students with papers which contradict what has already been said, I prefer having the papers ahead of time, before the evasive rationalizations.

"Your teacher dropped these off for me to see," I would much rather say, "knowing I was interested in you." Initially asking students how they are doing usually brings a routine, "Fine," even when they are failing cold.

Even though students need to be allowed to talk freely and express their own points of view, this offers no assurance of valid definitions of the situations at hand. Some youngsters are so caught up in defeating patterns of deception as a means of survival and self-enhancement that they cannot be honest with much of anybody, not even themselves.

Rationalizations compound rationalizations. And it can help head off obstructing distortions to gather related facts in advance of interviews when this seems appropriate and possible.

None of this is meant to say that counselors ought to reject or confront in shaming ways when counselees mislead us. We should not openly doubt and question anything and everything that is said. But, to the extent possible, we should face facts. And surely, we should recognize glaring deceptions.

The time comes with some of them when I ask, in puzzled tones, "What was your purpose in telling me that do you suppose? I don't give you grades here. I don't punish. I care about you and try to help you, as I can. What do you think you gained from telling me something that is not true?" And see where it leads.

Or, in a somewhat different vein, always less than omniscient, I might say, "I don't understand this. You tell me that you want to succeed and do better in school, but you do things which prevent you from succeeding. What do you make of this?"

Beautiful, insight-giving truth can come out of asking the obvious. At times students themselves offer words of explanation superior to our own schooled attempt at phrasing.

"It looks like maybe I don't want to let myself do well in school, doesn't it?" one boy told me. "Like maybe I am trying to get even with my mother or something. She's a teacher. For marrying this new guy I don't like . . . "

Giving them a chance to think things through their way is important. But equally so is for us to interact, to have meaningful exchange. We owe them our being genuine and whole enough to express our points of view. And as we can, we try to help them to find rational views and values apart from the self-defeating, faddish sludge some of their peers and the media heap upon them.

Realistically, we recognize what seem to be the *in* things to do in some circles, while recognizing that the in things are *out* in other circles and destined to be *old-fashioned* in times soon to come.

Related to the ins and outs, I sometimes share my dislike of long hair and beards for men, making very plain that my feeling is not rooted in a rejection of the young. As long as I keep mirrors away from me, I think of myself as one with the young. The dislike is more rooted in a rejection of the old. The young in me still associates long hair and beards with the established old of years ago.

All sorts of ins and outs change with the times, and such facts of life are shared in counseling, facts that have increased meaning with the shared experience of the elder partner in the counseling relationship.

HONEST!

"You *what!*" I hope I have never said, never with squints and scowls and shaming gestures of rejection.

Being shocked and showing it, especially in the areas of sex and drugs, are thought to be destructive to the counseling relationship. And likely they tend to be. But they are not necessarily the complete turn-off, the absolute, devastating end of everything that some declare.

Reactions of frank surprise or disagreement do not close the book on acceptance of the counselees. Counselors need not be as one with the attitudes and behavior of counselees in order to establish rapport. Quite the contrary.

The fact that we can be honest and open and still not reject *the person* makes possible our continuing function as competent counselors.

Exclaiming and showing disapproval might suggest that we take a look at ourselves, or even let the counselees take a look.

"Hey, that's an area loaded with emotion for me. For most people, I guess. And I reacted," I might have to admit. "But now, take it from the top again, and let me look at what you said, this time with a little more objectivity on my part . . ."

Nothing is more important than being genuine in any helping relationship.

Live truth. Honestly is the only way to go.

If we come off playing games, it shows. If we try to be something we are not, it shows. Phoniness and deception are time bombs at best.

Of course, some things we will not volunteer. Some things will be treated as personal and totally confidential. But none of this should prevent us from telling the truth or being honest.

"Did my mother call you?" I have students ask, now and then.

What am I going to do? Lie?

I hope not. Still this is what some parents want me to do.

"I don't want him (as often, "her") to know I called," parents sometimes ask.

"I will honor your request," I tell them, "up to the point where the question of whether we talked or not might come up. At which point I will readily admit that you did call. Then, when asked what we talked about, I will note that often interested parents call and that you are interested. But as to details, I might slip into something along the line of, 'I'm sorry. But I don't tell your parents everything you say to me, and I don't tell you everything your parents say to me.' Of course, when the subject is schoolwork or grades, there is nothing secret about that. Every day parents call the school about such things . . . "

RESPECT?

"I demand respect," some teachers and some parents declare. And I think, frequently aloud, "Then you will be disappointed. Like Dangerfield."

Perhaps we can demand pretended respect, a dishonesty of a sort. And we can require courteous behavior and punish those who offend. But we cannot gain respect by demanding it, and not always by even earning it.

Thinking along these lines, a counseling intern, once hit me with the assertion that for us to be effective in counseling, we must be *respected* by the counselees. (A tape recorder was going at the time.)

"Now, am I to infer from that," I answered, "that you also have the far-out idea that counselors should be respectable?"

We laughed. He agreed.

"What's involved in the counselor being respectable?"

"Respect is a two-way street," he responded. "I think that's what is lacking in ineffectual attempts at therapeutic relationships."

"You aren't going to accept the word *love* there in place of respect?"

"No."

"*Caring?*"

"No," he answered. "It seems there is a little more obligation involved in the word respect. Love is more an emotion, while respect is an activity."

"My word is *accept* or *acceptance*. Which recognizes the lack of rejection . . . "

"You're pretty Rogerian, aren't you?"

"I'm pretty heavy on the minimization of threat," I told him. "This is where I side with Rogers. But, maybe, now, thinking out loud, my emphasis is changing. Maybe the kids aren't threatened as they were. Like Glasser says, the kids aren't afraid of us anymore. Maybe my emphasis has moved over to being able to accept the people that come in . . . "

"Unconditional positive regard . . . " he said.

"Which is great," I mumbled, "as long as you have a ratio that I mentioned was in the preliminary publishing of the Report of the 1971 White House Conference on Youth, of [printed in error as] one counselor for every five students . . .

"And I guess I don't like the word *regard*," I continued. "I love them all, but, realistically, we have a bunch of spoiled little brats. This doesn't mean that we shoot them down as some of our angry colleagues advocate in the faculty lounge. Kids are where they are and come by it honestly. But many of them are obnoxious little globs of selfishness. And I hate to slip into misusing the word selfishness." Then straightening, I reworded, "They have not adequately expanded the self.

"The truth that some of our colleagues lose sight of, of course, is that the children are still children. And they have been treated like something else. They have been given so many privileges and opportunities to play at being adults that it is an insanity of a sort. Add to this the fact that there is a sexual awakening going on with no adequate attempt by anyone to enable them to cope with normal feelings and functions. They are not even provided with an adequate set of concepts and symbols with which to think about their everyday behavior . . .

"And add the many faulty or defeating orientations, like, 'Don't love. Don't get serious about anyone. For if you do, it won't last, and you will be hurt.' The conclusion of which is, 'Don't love. It hurts.' " . . .

"You *respect* the kids," he told me. . . .

It is not a word I usually apply to my relationships with students. But I guess, when I think about it, it is true, even though some of the young people I work with do definitely disrespectable things.

Some kids arrive with the orientation, *get before being got.*

I recall Judge Gilliam, then of Denver, saying "Father Flanagan of Boys Town used to tell us, 'There is no such thing as a bad boy.' But I am here to tell you that some of the kids I have seen are meaner than hell."

Some kids are difficult to accept. But I work at it—although, as any practicing counselor knows, it can be a wearing drain of energy, with little apparent accomplishment at times. And I accept them all as individuals. I recognize their potential. I try to listen with an open mind to their points of view. And all of this is respect, I concede.

It is a sort of *self*-respect that I have learned, not necessarily earned by the current recipients, but earned by the thousands of becoming individuals I have known through the years, the thousands with whom I have identified, who have become a part of me, of my self.

I, and my counseling colleagues, do indeed respect the grand potential, the spark, the realistic hope of what can be.

ON SHORT-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

Among the most troubled and troublesome students in school are those who have had disappointing relationships in the past. They expect close relationships to end badly.

They often declare that no one has ever cared or tried to help them, when quite the contrary may be true.

Knowledge of this fact is one thing that sets the experienced counselor apart from the well-intentioned do-gooder who may or may not have significant potential for helping young people.

Typically, many men and women become brother-sister-buddy volunteer youth worker, crisis-unit-phone answerer, or whatever. And God bless them. They often do a wonderful job. But I mean to refer to common examples among them who come on strong with, "Nobody, but nobody, has ever done right by this kid. Nobody has ever cared. He has been treated unfairly at every turn. No wonder he has acted the way he has," although the record shows a long line of social workers, counselors, special teachers, probation officers, and agency workers who have spent hundreds of hours doing what they could to help.

"I'm going to hang in there and really stay with this kid," they say. "All this one needs is somebody to care, to consistently care. And I care. No one else does. That's obvious. But I do . . . "

And some do. Some stay with the kid for a significant time. Again, God bless them.

But the ones I mean to talk about, after a month or a week, declare, "You know what that kid did to me? And after all I did. And then to break a promise and go out and get into trouble again . . . "

Some who think they want to help don't understand the game.

For many kids a self-fulfilling prophecy is at work. Kids who have had relationships end badly in the past expect them to end badly in the future, and they often act on this expectancy rather than in a manner that would lessen the chance of them going the same way again. They have experienced the pain that can come from caring. They defend themselves by avoiding close, caring relationships.

Worthy of note here is that something is inherently wrong with most counseling internship and crisis intervention relationships. The relationships formed are by their nature brief. And youngsters who need lasting relationships are repeatedly subjected to another and another experience with an eager someone who seems committed to help but who is soon gone from the scene. While offering limited help, interns and crisis counselors reinforce an aspect of the troubled students' experience that is not all that good . . .

Sometimes, quite intentionally, I do not attempt to form counseling relationships with students who seem to need them most.

This may seem foolish to the novice, and it is difficult for me to deal with, personally, wanting to help and seeing the overwhelming need. But in cases where I will not be able to see a student regularly for a reasonable period of time, I must face the fact that I may accomplish nothing worth the doing by initiating counseling.

Infrequent sessions for the purpose of educational-career planning and general information-giving are more the rule in school counseling, attempting to service the hundreds assigned. Still, long-term counseling relationships evolve and continue, even though limited by unrealistic loads and noncounseling assignments.

With so many currents acting on the direction of students and on counselors, we find ourselves both hindered in keeping our commitments and drawn into relationships not intended.

PROMISES, PROMISES

"What happens when you get a commitment from a kid, and she doesn't come through?" one of my interns asked me the other day. "I worked out a contract with the kid to do all her work in Ms. Wilson's class, and she promised me she would stop goofin' around, so she wouldn't keep getting sent to the office. And this morning I find her in the assistant principal's office again. Next, I checked with Ms. Wilson who gives me the 'kid's doing absolutely nothing' bit. And worse, now it seems the girl is not as close to me as she was the last time we talked. She's not as open as before. Ms. Wilson tells me to give her a good shaking up. And the office says she needs a swift kick in the rear."

"Ms. Wilson and the office do their things, and we do ours," I said. "Stay with her. There's nothing new in the fact that people reject her for her negative behavior, and she's hanging this on you. You are people, she reasons. Therefore, you reject her. And she rejects you right back . . . "

"Suggestions?"

"Well, let's see," I pondered, lightly. "Maybe three approaches come to mind.

"1. You promised you would make it this time. You could have. You have the ability. So why didn't you? You're just a lunkhead like the teachers say? Out! I have better things to do than to waste my time with you.

"2. So you blew it again. Well, I can't help you until you are ready to help yourself. Now, when you really want to do something about the problem, come around. I'll try to help. But I can't do anything for you until you are ready to make a commitment.

"3. How do you feel about it? . . . How did it happen? . . . What was the purpose of the behavior? What did you get out of it? . . . What next? Where we go from here? What's your plan?"

"So we go with No. 3," smiled the intern.

"Business as usual. Help her see where she is today, and help her make plans for it to be a better tomorrow," I said with someone knocking on my door. "Of course, don't make her a superstar because of her negative behavior. Avoid rewarding her with additional attention. Put down the inappropriate behavior as best you can without putting down the kid . . . "

And soon after, the same day, a counselee of my own was saying, as so many have before, "Look, no kidding, I promise. I'm not going to be out there stealing no more."

"Don't promise," I found myself responding. "I care about you and don't want to see you get in trouble. But I will care about you whether you do dumb things or not. This is a place for you to talk things over, to be yourself, and to decide what you want to do . . . You are the one who has to live with your decisions, the ones you make here, and the ones you make out there . . . "

"Promise *yourself* if you want to promise anyone," I used to say. Then one came along who had read one of my books and bought what I had to say about the contents of the self, and he countered, "Man, *you* are part of my self. Don't you know?" And I stopped saying that.

No approach is perfect and completely predictable.

Contract method or not, promising is a common occurrence in counseling—one that some counselors wish to be a climaxing conclusion. In the private, non-threatening setting, counselees resolve to change their ways. At times it becomes almost a religious conversion sort of thing. And then, with those who may need continued counseling the most, they fall short.

If a promise to the counselor has been broken, the student has not only the failure elsewhere to contend with but also the breech of trust with the counselor.

The relationship is damaged, not necessarily beyond repair. But regardless of the counselor's attempt to be accepting, when a personal, one-to-one commitment has been made and broken, the counselee will be inclined to rationalize and to build defenses against the counseling relationship.

Painful experiences result, on both sides, when a counselee seems compelled to destroy a valued relationship in attempting to cope with a failure to keep a promise.

The counselee feels guilt and, in dealing with this additional failure, slips into patterns of the past. The counselor tends to become just another in a long line of people with whom the counselee has related and failed—people who rejected, punished, deserted, or predictably ignored.

Admittedly, good arguments can be made for having contracts between two people, with felt obligations. When people feel bound to do something, they may be more likely to do it. But rather than a binding agreement, I favor a developing ***plan.***

The counselor cares and is rooting for the counselee to succeed. The counselor, quite naturally, may show disappointment when the counselee falls short, but this should be disappointment shared *with* the counselee not disappointment *in* the counselee.

The counselor should work to see that concern is not interpreted as rejection. This should be spelled out for the counselee and should be evident in the attitude of the counselor.

This does not mean that faulty behavior should be accepted as correct and satisfactory. But the counselee should not be rejected.

Shunning is a waste. Spend energies on the question, "What can we do to make things better?"

THE UNCOOPERATIVE

At times I am inclined to lay it on the line and say, "Look, I am here to help you if you want to try to work to make things better. If you don't care, good-bye . . . "

This can be effective. It can be effective at the moment, sometimes moving the students to acting then and there. It can be effective in keeping the option open for some future moment when students decide they do want to do something about their problems, enough to swallow and go see the counselor.

However, another point of view suggests a bit more that *we are all in this together.*

The teachers are required to have uncooperative students in their classes. Why should school counselors get off with less? Being fair and reasonable, counselors should get the same demoralizing stuff the teachers do, and they should work harder on students who are resistive and do not seem to relate to them.

At times I out and out invite students to be abusive to me. When students have been in trouble with teachers, I leave them with the parting shot, "The next time you are about to blow up, come and see me. Come and tell me off, if you want to tell somebody off. I won't let you hit me. But in here with the door closed, the words aren't going to hurt me. Without an audience I don't have to be concerned about what all those other people may think. I don't have to maintain any position of authority over you or other students.

"Now," I tell them, "it is natural enough to be angry at times and need to let off steam. But with all those people *out there*, with people your own age or with adults, when you blow up, this only increases your problems in the long run. And you don't need that," I remind them. "If you come in here angry, I know I didn't do anything against you, and all that steam is coming from someplace else. So there's no need for me to get mad at you . . . "

I recall a boy (no isolated case) who seemed totally obnoxious to those around him and who had a very negative self-image. No one liked him. His behavior suggested he did not even like himself. And he made it plain that he certainly did not like anyone else.

Consistent with my commitment and beliefs, I proceeded on the assumption that what he needed was a caring person to accept him as a worthy individual. But, clearly, no one that I knew wanted to even tolerate his presence, let alone accept him.

I saw him with the intent of seeing him every few days for a time and found his attitude to be summed up in a relatively silent, "Damn you. Try to accept me."

I tried. And what a drain.

After a long forty minutes, with him giving me no positive feedback whatsoever, with me doing all the work, I was exhausted and on the edge of giving way to base feelings and telling him not to come back until he felt he wanted to do something to change. Feeling a blend of hate, guilt, and failure, I hung on to my poise, trying to find common ground, likes and interests, with which to relate, reviewing test scores from the past, and stressing potential . . .

And all I received was a condescending yes or no, more directed to the floor. The very few times he did glance my way, it was a frown or a look that read, "What, are you crazy?"

Finally, the interview was concluded, more or less, and I gave him his pass to return to class.

He took it passively, and at the door stopped, turned, *smiled*, and said, "When do I come in again?"

"You would like to come again?" I could not help asking.

"Yeah, I think," he said. "You're the only one around here who knows where I'm at and isn't mad at me."

We settled on a time and date, and two days later I suffered another session, quite similar, only this time he smiled before going to the door.

An inch at a time, things got better. At least I saw them getting better.

Most of his teachers said, "He is doing absolutely nothing in my class." But although he was not doing passing work, he was doing more than nothing. And the following year, he did satisfactory work in all of his classes.

I am not sure what would have happened with him, had I simply sent him away and told him to come back if and when he wanted to do something about his problem.

I am glad I did not . . .

CHAPTER **FIVE**

IN THE LIMITED TIME AVAILABLE

So I am into my sixties, and I still have not saved the world.

But maybe, just maybe, my life has been worthwhile anyway.

The thing so difficult for us do-gooders to learn is that trying to do all that should be done is overwhelming and self-defeating. If we are to be effective in much of anything, we have to sort out questions of emphasis. We must decide on a few specific yet flexible approaches and reasonable goals.

Otherwise, we burn out early and join the ranks of cynics and those ineffectuals who infer the road to heaven is paved with bad intentions.

"Tell me," Senator Pell once asked us in a Congressional Hearing, "Do you counselors try to get kids to select goals that they will be sure to reach, or do you try to get them to strive toward some distant, unattainable star?" In the first instance, he noted, the students would feel satisfaction in having reached their goals. In the other, they would strive on and on, never being satisfied but drawn, hopefully, to advancing as far as they could go.

My answer suggested that stars are great in providing orientation and direction but not as goals. The counselors' job is to help students be realistic in their development of goals, always understanding that change is a never-ending fact of life, that they should revise and refine their goals as they go along, in the light of new experiences and the changing world about them.

I would wish much the same for counselors as for counselees. To have goals and expectations that are so unrealistic that we cannot find satisfaction in what we accomplish is foolish, indeed. Equally foolish is to give up trying and suppose we can do nothing really worth the while.

THE MONSTROUS INFANTS

"With the limited time and energies I have, and wanting my efforts to count, what do you think I ought to emphasize when working with kids?" I once asked a prison psychologist from San Quentin. I was just back from World War II and working with youngsters in my old neighborhood, the Mission District in San Francisco.

"Tear them away from mama's apron strings," he told me without hesitation, "and teach them to stand on their own two feet."

I must have winced because he quickly added, "You didn't ask me what would be easy. What I am telling you to do will probably get you into trouble. It will in those cases where it is needed most. But it is what you ought to do.

"In that great stone fortress where I work," he continued, "we have lots of classifications. We psychologists can put quite a few different names on them." This was all before I went back to college. "But there is really only one thing wrong with them, wrong in the sense that it gets them put in prison.

"They never learned to stand on their own two feet.

"They are fixated big babies who think that the world owes them a living, that mama should still be taking care of them, that the whole world is some sort of extension of mama."

Now the exact words may well be lost to me. And I may expand on it a bit. But the valid message continues, and in the telling I get images of many youngsters I have known since—some who grew up and some who did not.

"Criminals," said the psychologist, "are monstrous infants who feel that when they are hungry all they should have to do is yell and someone should come along and stick nipples in their mouths and feed them, and that when they dirty themselves, all they should have to do is kick their feet and cry and someone should come and change their filthy diapers and make them all comfy again.

"They feel they owe nothing in return.

"They feel that if they are not fed and taken care of, to their satisfaction, they are warranted to lash out and hurt people and to steal their hard-earned property. They rationalize it is the system's fault that they have the trouble they do, that the world is no damn good, and that anyone who gets in their way deserves whatever they dish out in retribution.

"They do what they feel like doing, rather than do what might result in them learning to stand on their own two feet as contributing members of society."

Now, perhaps, this advice from a 1946 long-forgotten name should be updated somewhat. Drugs are more widely used in escaping responsibility . . . The basic dependency at all levels of society has been expanded . . . Social agencies, intended to enable self-sufficiency, in too many cases, have institutionalized dependency . . . Some people do not see ***actualization*** and ***self-discovery*** as including relative self-sufficiency—emotional and financial . . .

Still, the prison psychologist's view rings true. Indeed, one of the goals of counseling should always be to help counselees to come to stand on their own two feet.

Working toward solutions together should not mean the development of dependencies. While counseling relationships should not be programmed to explosively self-destruct, they should not create lasting interdependencies either.

To enter into a close caring relationship in which truth is explored in depth can be both a joy and a frightening experience. And the same can be said of the experience of being brought to the self-sufficiency of standing on your own two feet.

Recognizing the intrinsic risk-taking involved, one of the enabling tasks in counseling is to ***minimize threat.*** And this leads us to a number of considerations contributing to effective counseling in the limited time we have available. (And high time!)

For now, I am calling these ***considerations.***

To call them *steps* would be misleading because they are bound to overlap, change sequence, and intertwine within the counseling experience and beyond. One does not necessarily follow another in logical order. They differ with the needs of the individual students, with the circumstances of the students' world, and with the delimitations of counseling opportunities.

Yet, each is eventually a contributing aspect of the help provided which we collectively call *counseling.*

It may, indeed, be more appropriate to term these considerations, ***imperatives.***

MINIMIZE THREAT

"Look, you little blankety-blank-blank. If you don't do what you are supposed to, we're going to slam you up against the lockers and—"

Threats have a way of causing changes in behavior, at least for the moment, although not necessarily for the better. Too often they hinder growth and block productive thought.

Certainly, counselees should be brought to see the consequences of their acts, whether these be in the past or contemplated for the future. But threatening is not counseling. Quite the contrary.

Counseling involves attempts at minimizing or reducing feelings of threat, through developing coping courses of action and through opportunities to discuss and to view truth without fear of punishment, shaming, or ridicule. Threat, genuine or imagined, results in autistic restructuring and defensive distortions rather than understanding and sound solutions to problems. We cannot build on error and falsehood.

Of course, threats come in more than the slam-against-the-locker variety. More common than physical threats are threats to image and self-picture—although these are not always recognized for what they are.

"I can do the work in that class," some failing students say. "I just don't. My dad is always telling how I could be getting A's instead of D's and F's."

So why don't they?

At times the answer is that less threat is experienced in getting F's in school than in trying, giving their all, and earning only C's or D's.

No one likes to face up to inability to succeed in school, to rejection by parents and peers, or even to normal sexual feelings if these are in conflict with the affective conditioning of the individual or with the milieu in which he or she must function.

Until threat is minimized, energy tends to be expended in erecting defenses rather than applied to forward movement and productive thought.

Most, if not all, of the considerations contributing to effective counseling that I mention in this book have a part in minimizing threat.

PROVIDE CONFIDENTIALITY

For counseling, as such, to be most effective, it should be a priesthood of a sort, with the counselor being on the inside, knowing everything the counselee brings to mind and never telling anyone else. This way, with a minimum of threat, the counselee would be able to bring up anything and everything necessary to view what is really happening. But overriding concerns have come to bear.

> "It is necessary that school counselors be enabled to provide confidential settings," I wrote in *The, Status of Guidance and Counseling in the Nation's Schools*, (See Appendix A), "so that they may form relationships which allow and encourage counselees to discuss their situations and concerns realistically. Policies, record systems, physical facilities, and procedures should be such as to make this possible.
>
> "The circumstances which may ethically or legally require school counselors to disclose information gained from counseling relationships should be made known to counselees whenever it appears that content may approach these circumstances. That is, when it looks like a counselee might discuss something the counselor cannot keep secret, the counselor should define what can be kept secret and what cannot . . ."

No one should be drawn out by the counseling situation to tell secrets that will not be treated as such.

But on the line, suddenly, things are said that may or may not be held in confidence.

"So these guys say I have to fight. They'll get me on the way home. But don't tell anybody . . . " This takes a little sorting. There are things to talk about. But no way do I let the kid condescend to being slaughtered because he is afraid of being called 'chicken' . . .

"I stole a watch from a locker . . . " This is past history. I have no obligation to tell. Learning that I really do keep confidences, she may well go on to discuss additional concerns . . .

"I'm robbing a house tonight, buying some stuff . . . " This is future, and if I do not tell and it happens, I am a party to it under the law . . .

"My aunt, who lives with us, about four years older than me, and real strong, holds me down and jacks me off . . . " With the best rationale to the boy that I can muster, I have no choice under the law but to call and report a suspected case of abuse . . .

"She used to be my very best friend. But now she is saying these awful things about me behind my back. You won't let her know I was talking about her, please? . . . " My lips are sealed, unless this opening leads into abuse or life-threatening material. And this I might very well spell out for her in advance of such possibilities . . .

Actually, defining the extent of confidentiality and explaining what will not be held as confidential does much to assure students that confidentiality does exist. Saying what cannot be kept secret is simpler than saying what can. And through such clarifications, students come to understand that they do indeed have an opportunity to speak openly and honestly about their concerns.

On the other side of the coin, students should be given to understand that they may not expect action to be taken on matters just because they have made them known to counselors. That is, counselors might help students think through the question of whether or not a theft from a desk or a joint in a sock should be reported, but counselors are not the ones to routinely act on such information.

Let me stress this is something commonly misunderstood.

Counselors have offices, the stereotype goes. And people who have offices are authorities. Clarification is needed.

Also, emphasis is required at times to help students understand that not everything counselors know and discuss with students is confidential material.

"You won't let my parents know I'm flunking biology when they come in for that conference this afternoon will you? . . . "

Grades are not secrets from parents. Neither are uncompleted homework assignments and disciplinary actions by the main office. Many things are general knowledge amongst the professional staff. But instances arise where students are confused as to where the lines are drawn.

Counselors cannot be tickets to cut class, for example. And relationship problems can develop when a student is deceptive, requiring a straightforward definition of the situation.

"What happened with you yesterday?" I have had to ask some kids inclined to scapegoat and project betrayal. "I sent out a call slip. You didn't arrive. I couldn't find you. I didn't know what happened to you. My obligation at that point was to notify the main office. You might have passed out in a rest room or been mugged for all I knew. I was worried about you. What happened?

"I want you to have a clear view of this now," I have defined. "Your skipping was not a counseling confidence. And my reporting a missing student to the main office was just a routine part of the machinery that all staff members are involved in for your protection. It is not in any way related to respecting what you and I might be talking about. When you turn up missing out there, that's not just one big secret between us. Other people are immediately involved and responsible . . . "

Now in some schools the code of the underworld is in force to such an extent that the counselors will view things differently. One counselor friend, far enough away that I can tell, discovered through her counselees that the top pimp and pusher in the school was a hall guard. He knew that she knew. She knew that he knew she knew. And she played it that way for the safety of her counselees. But to one extent or another, keeping confidences turns out to be a relative thing.

When life-or-death danger exists, suspected abuse, or loss of contact with reality, counselors, as a rule, refer and pass along information to those in positions to help.

LISTEN

Genuinely hearing what is being said is, of course, an important aspect of counseling. And surely, this is not as easy to do as people away from the front line may suppose.

We mortals can only pay attention to one thing at a time. And although we are capable of rapid shifts of attention, we have our limitations.

Being concerned at the moment about a girl who has just run away, about a boy referred by an angry teacher, about dozens of varied college scholarship applications, and about hundreds of course registration forms that are due to be checked by Friday can make it difficult to give adequate attention to the student who arrives furious because the librarian says she lost a book she is absolutely positive she returned last Tuesday.

If we are to do an adequate job, we must be willing and able to hear the words and more. We must be able to pick up on hints and provide students with a receptivity which enables them to talk beyond the superficial.

The girl seemingly furious about the lost library book, not wanting to ask her parents for money for a lost book, for example, may be primarily concerned about her parents' separation, or fearful of the roughs who yanked the book from her and threatened to get her after school, or embarrassed by the fact the missing book dealt with sex and worried that she may be pregnant . . .

To insure that students know we are listening and that we are willing to hear what they wish to say, the counseling situation deserves repeated definition from time to time.

"Here you should feel free to talk about anything you want to talk about," I define the situation, one-to-one, behind the closed door of my office. "But you never have to talk about anything you don't want to talk about.

"So if I ever ask you about something and you don't want to answer, please, just say, 'I don't want to talk about that,' and we won't. Then, you see, I can feel free to talk openly with you, knowing you will let me know if I touch on something you don't want to discuss. OK?"

And, "OK," is the usual response.

But, the question comes, how to hear the silent counselees? How do we enable them to talk?

The obvious I have just mentioned. We tell them that they can talk, that the counseling opportunity is there for them.

We minimize threat.

We devise ways to help them get started and find rapport. Jack Somny, down in Florida, used popular records to draw them out. I used Mooney Problem Check Lists, and now a similar form developed for use in local schools.

We try to be available when the moment is right for them.

The image comes, as I write this, of one previously silent boy exploding into my office, yanking free of the teacher behind him.

"I was taking him to the office," said the teacher. "He wants to see you. They're busy over there. He lit into another boy in the hall. I don't know what it's all about. I have to get back to my class."

The boy slumped into the chair next to my desk as the teacher left. After a minute of his usual silence, I prompted, "What's up?"

"If my mother hits me with that broom again, I'm going to take it away from her and beat her with it . . . "

In due time I asked about the incident in the hall.

"Just nobody going to push me around anymore. I've had it. Punks, parents, cops, teachers . . . " And we talked on . . .

Solutions to all problems are not to be found in counseling. Certainly not in the short term of things. At times the most that can be done is to help people come down, to *just cool it*, to help them to keep from making matters worse.

With the door closed, no immediate audience to contend with, and no brittle position of authority to defend, counselors are in relatively unique positions to allow catharsis.

I recall using the term ***catharsis*** in an adult education class I was teaching in psychology recently. One of the women in the class was employed in a hospital and held a different meaning for the word that caused a breakdown in communications. But only momentarily. Her background actually provided her with a vivid connotation for the term that contributed to her understanding of it all.

Indeed, at times kids need to let it all come out before things can get better.

But a place must be available, an appropriate, private place for such activities, or we have a regrettable mess, for sure.

Again, although counseling offers many things, nothing is more important than provision for breaking the frustration-aggression cycles, for a place where kids can unwind, express themselves freely without fear of punishment, be listened to, and be heard by one who understands beyond the superficial.

Blaming our own limited circumstances, school counselors tend to fall short. We slip to rationalizing and pointing to the barriers rather than building bridges, often because more time is needed than is available. Always *other* pressing things have to be done, and other kids out there must be seen, instead of just this one in front of us at the moment.

So *see* is what we do, too often, when *hear* is what is needed.

And our actions cannot be called ***counseling*** if we do not listen and hear in depth what is being said.

MAXIMIZE FREEDOM

"The great question before us is how a culture can induce its members to take its own survival into account," asserted B.F. Skinner, psychologist author of *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, a controversial book which argued that "freedom" was an illusion given psychologists' ability to predict human behavior using positive reinforcement. And I vividly recall John Krumboltz responding before an overflow crowd of American Personnel and Guidance Association conventioneers in Chicago in 1972.

"You can't induce members to value cultural survival," said Krumboltz, "if you utter words which cause them to think that they must give up their most precious and cherished values—mainly, their freedom and their dignity.

"You can do it, however, if you show them how the values of human freedom and dignity can be better accomplished through the judicious use of reinforcement principles . . .

"I know that you favor a society that would enhance human freedom as most people understand that term, Dr. Skinner. But I would like to hear you say so."

Krumboltz asked for a volunteer from the vast assemblage. A man named David Williams came forward. Then in full view of the audience Krumboltz set up the props for his demonstration-experiment. He placed a ten dollar bill on one table and placed a yellow piece of paper over it.

He placed a one dollar bill on a different table and placed a white piece of paper over that one.

"Now, ah," with the style of an awkward magician, he proceeded. "I would like to ask that you pick up either the yellow or the white piece of paper. Ah, and which ever one you pick up, you may keep whatever is underneath it. And if you choose, you need not pick up either one.

"Now, while you are thinking about that," laughter . . . "I need to make a little note over here . . . " He penned a quick prediction which he handed to Dr. Skinner to hold, then instructed David, "Go ahead and do what you're going to do.

"Let the record show," Krumboltz observed, "that he picked up the yellow piece of paper." More audience laughter.

"Now I want to ask you a few questions. Was that your own free choice?"

"Yes."

"Have I interfered with your freedom in any way?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Would you say that right this minute," asked Krumboltz, "you are more free or less free than you were five minutes ago?"

"More free. I'm going to be able to pay my parking ticket."

"Dr. Skinner, I wonder if you'd please read that note."

"He will pick up the yellow piece of paper," read B. F. Skinner.

"Alright, David, you will notice I predicted the behavior you were going to engage in. Due to the fact that I predicted your behavior, would you now say I interfered with your freedom of choice?"

"No," came the answer.

"OK," mused Krumboltz. "Let me ask you one more question. Suppose that, instead of putting money under each piece of paper, I had put down a yellow piece of paper and a white piece of paper and then I had pulled a gun out of my shoulder holster and had pointed it right at you and said, 'David Williams, pick up that yellow piece of paper.' What would you do?"

"I would pick up the yellow paper."

"In those circumstances, would you say I had interfered with your freedom of choice?"

"Yes."

"The moral," said Krumboltz, turning to the audience, "is that when I gave Dave Williams an opportunity to choose among several good things, that is, several positive reinforcers, he says that I enhanced his freedom. He felt that my ability to predict his behavior was irrelevant. But if I were to use force or the threat of force, he would say that I interfered with his freedom.

"So what sort of freedom are we talking about here? The operational definition of freedom, for most people, is the opportunity to choose from among alternative, positive reinforcers without violence or threats of violence.

"Now, Dr. Skinner . . . I ask you, if using this definition of freedom, the opportunity to choose from among positive reinforcers without punishment, do you favor a society in which human freedom would be enhanced?"

"Absolutely," Skinner replied. "But . . . "

"Thank you, Dr. Skinner," interrupted Krumboltz.

The demonstration is one to be repeated, by anyone who has the money.

The point, as shared with me by Krumboltz this writing of February 1991, is that counselors and parents can provide permissible alternatives with positive consequences and without threats to help kids feel empowered and free.

And not in contradiction, the point I have in mind is that people can and should be guided to act in concert with intelligent systems—whether new or long-established—without violence or threats of violence.

In any event, we in education and counseling can bring young people and the tomorrow of our country to greater satisfaction and freedom. Whether we will or not is in doubt, but the ways are known and open to us.

Surely, within the counseling setting, freedom of choice can and should prevail.

NOTE THE CONSEQUENCES

"I'm grounded again," said a ninth-grade girl, one I knew to have had an abortion a few months before. "But I'm going out tonight no matter what."

"No matter what," I reflected. Her parents were about to give up on her.

"For sure," she said. "Larry is going to be in town. And I'm so bored. And he's not really as bad as my parents say. Just a few years older."

"What do you think your parents will do if they find you're gone?"

"Oh, they will. They'll check on me. And then they will probably call Juvenile."

"What happens then?"

"I don't much care. I'm just going out," she commenced combing her hair. "I'm going crazy, shut up with nothing to do. And I know you're going to say, there's the make-up work and homework and all. And what else? TV and the telephone. You know they have me limited to two five-minute calls a night?"

"Now, I'm a little confused at this point. You say you don't like to be shut up and restricted, but yet you are going to do something that will result in you being shut up and restricted even more. Your parents sat right there and told us both that if you cross them one more time, they are going to turn you over to the court."

"I really don't care what happens to me. I just don't care."

"You don't care if they put you in a cell—"

"I don't care."

"With a wall around you. And tell you when you can eat and what."

"No."

"And decide for you who you will be living with for the next few years?"

"No. I am past caring what happens to me."

"So stay home tonight," I told her.

"What?"

"You don't care what happens. Stay home and do your homework."

"I'm going out."

"But you said you didn't care what happens to you. The restrictions you have on you right now are nothing to what they will be," I said. "Now, Susie, I don't mean to play games with you. You are intelligent and know what I am saying. You are smart enough to let yourself get a real feel of the consequences before you do something you will regret."

"So what do you want from me?"

"What I want, and what I think you will want in the long run, is for you to continue to put things together so that you will have a happier, more successful life. As we have reviewed before, we both want you to make it through high school with enough training that you can get a job and be financially independent when you graduate."

"I'm going out."

"You're the one who has to live through it. It's up to you," I concluded. . . .

And as it turned out she did homework instead of going out that weekend. At this writing, she is making it in a job-training program in high school . . .

In defining rational reality, tomorrow demands consideration. Always the question of what will come next needs attention. Both counselee and counselor should note the consequences of what has been done, of the immediate activity before them, and of possible courses of action in the future.

With increasing frequency, after listening to what is happening, I slip to responding with an old vaudeville bit from my childhood:

" 'Doctor it hurts when I go like this,' says the one comic, flexing his elbow.

" 'So don't go like this,' says the other."

Some kids smile and say quite simply, "O.K."

Others take longer in grasping the idea that at least some of their troubles are the consequences of their own acts.

CHAPTER **SIX**

BEYOND OMBUDSMEN

Keynoting a counselors' convention in Utah in the early '70s, I found myself following their state superintendent on the unannounced subject of ***ombudsmen.*** His talk called for ombudsmen in the schools and suggested that school counselors should fulfill this role.

Without warning, I was expected to respond in behalf of school counselors. And putting aside a portion of my talk on the *"fun formula,"* this I did.

Amongst the sincere and valid concerns that kids bring us, included, I said, are substantial measures of unenlightened garbage. Everyday students come in angry, making destructive, irrational demands. And for counselors to blindly take their part against the establishment, whenever and wherever, is questionable at best.

I do not believe that most counselors favor the role moving in this direction, and I do not believe that we would long be supported in this pursuit, certainly not by those who have to pay the bills.

In the long run, I said, what the students, the teachers, the administrators, and the public all want most are basically the same things.

The role of school counselors, I declared, should bring us all closer to rational consensus.

And now, years later, it seems more important than ever that school counselors have something more to offer than the same old power-structure approach.

Our primary function continues to be to provide the students with opportunities to think things over in confidential settings away from both demanding authority figures and dominating peers.

Students come making requests and expressing feelings that are reversed days or even minutes later. The counselors are not the ones, through some special-influence role, who reverse them. The students reverse them. Counselors merely provide the non-threatening opportunities that make it all possible.

"I hate that teacher. Everybody does. You have to get me out of that crummy class . . . " students demand, sometimes sweet little junior high girls using words I don't want to put in print.

"I can't make a change of schedule for you, but—"

"Why not?"

"For one thing," I explain, "I don't have the authority. I don't get you out of courses you asked to take."

"I didn't know that class was going to be the way it is."

"We can send over a *request* for a change and see what happens, if this is what you really want. But tell me, what's going on?"

"Do you know what that teacher wants me to do? Oow, I just hate her guts . . . "

If the door is not closed by this time, I motion for the student to close it. (The students are nearer the door. I never position myself between the students and the door.)

And more times than not, to my continuing surprise, after they have had time to talk it out and to review what has happened, they say variations of, "Oh, I can stick it out. She's not so bad. I had it coming. Let's not ask for a change . . . "

Often, little more is needed than an opportunity for catharsis, to let off steam, instead of being slapped down and further frustrated.

Counselors are ombudsmen in the finest sense by being good counselors, by being enabled through a reasonable assignment and load to be counselors.

EMPATHIZE

What trait or skill, more than any other, qualifies a person to be an adequate counselor?

My answer has to be, an ability to empathize with others without becoming overwhelmed with the weight of their many problems.

Empathy is not the same as sympathy.

It is the experience of participating in the feelings and ideas of our counselees. It is not a matter of reaching the same immature, stagnating, defeating conclusions that some bring through the door. And the primary counselor attribute, to my way of thinking, is to be able to be one with those suffering the real and/or imagined unfairness of the world without becoming bogged down with self-pity.

Yet, all is relative, and I am not trying to tell anyone that I am immune to being overwhelmed and certainly not that I never regress to feeling sorry for myself.

I recall sitting in an after-midnight circle of counselors in a Drug Abuse Committee meeting in San Francisco and saying, "So some years ago, we put together this grand official statement as to what counselors ought to be. But all we have to fill the jobs are human beings . . . "

We have our limitations.

Even empathizing, or attempting to do so, does not solve anything in itself. It does not necessarily assure that either counselors or counselees know the truth of things in depth. But it does allow us to travel with our counselees upon this grand search.

Unless we empathize, trying to be one with the counselees and experience their side of the line, counselors do little more than join the ranks of authority figures, trying to get them to conform.

Of course, having to play authority figure is not as shameful as some people make it out to be. A continuing need exists for intelligent law enforcement and the like. But there is room for something else, something less understood, something apart that we call counseling.

One of the most infuriating experiences counselors endure is having get-tough administrators or teachers refer students to us with the expectation of a repeat performance of the huff-and-puff treatment they have already applied without success time and time again.

"I've had it with her," the staple-sealed note read. "No homework again today and does not even respond when I ask her about it. Swat her a good one . . . "

"I'm never going back to that class again. She never explains enough. Just always on me about something." The student talked on, building a case against the teacher. "I don't care what happens."

"You are upset, which means you *do* care, quite a bit about something," I reflected after a few minutes of tears and more of the same. "Is it just the class? How are things going otherwise?" I asked, knowing she had occasional troubles at home.

"My dog died last night," she blurted. "I found him about three this morning. And I just sat there with him in my arms for a couple of hours, until my folks found me . . . I grew up with that old dog. I loved him so . . . "

She moved to telling of fun times they had had together. In stride I shared my sadness in losing a pet some weeks before.

"They just don't last as long as people," I found myself saying as the bell sounded for passing to her next class. "When we bargain for the love and joy of pets, we bargain for the sad part as well. But they're worth it . . . "

"Thanks for, for, you know, the Kleenex," she said. "I'll get the assignment done in study hall and get it by right after school. It isn't that much."

"There are a couple of minutes extra," I said, putting a time on her pass, "if you want to put a little water on your face. Stop by later, why don't you, and let me know how things are going."

And then, she turned back from the door, and there was a quick hug that broke me up.

ACCEPT

Remember the unresponsive boy I told of at the close of Chapter Four? I am thinking now of the wearing drain on me as I attempted to accept him and to make the most of his brief and blurred answers in exploring where he was from his point of view.

And now, too many images flood my mind of boys and girls who were unable to find happiness and success because of feelings of inadequacy and rejection—rejection by parents, by peers, by teachers, and by self.

We would be dishonest to suggest that their problems are not further complicated by the natural tendency for human counselors to reject them as well.

But nothing makes more sense in education or in counseling than the rule that says, ***Accept them where they are, and move forward with them from there.***

Being angry with students because they are not where they should be, achievement-wise and/or behavior-wise, goes nowhere.

In classwork, accepting students at a level of knowledge and general competence where they may experience success is imperative.

In counseling, accepting students as they are in terms of their academic competencies, and more, is equally imperative. We must accept them as worthy, significant individuals while focusing on their behavior beyond the classroom, their attitudes, their feelings, and their aspirations for tomorrow or lack of same. And we must recognize that their definitions of where they are in all of this may not always be honestly shared with us and that attempts at relating truth may be distorted by ***autistic restructuring.***

This is not to say that we should condone negative behavior. But counselors should muster a caring acceptance of the individual students, regardless of self-destructive activities and unproductive attitudes.

Few, if any, taboos should exist regarding concerns to be brought up in counseling. A continuing acceptance of the material being discussed should be such as to allow the students to frankly express and view their problem areas with increasing clarity—even with the contradicting limitations on what can be treated as confidential under the law.

With the conceptual redefinition made possible by the acceptance from the counselors in whom they have confided, students come to more realistically accept themselves and their situations. In this they have less need for the inhibiting defenses that waste away their energies and obstruct a healthy view of things.

Our acceptance is important because it helps them to accept themselves, enabling them to function and move forward.

This is true for both those who feel guilt from the *past* and those who dread the *future*.

The *present*, to my way of thinking, is a fleeting instant as one becomes the other, as future becomes past. And this fleeting instant is what we have to work with in building what will be.

A girl, not long ago, was overwhelmed by make-up work and tests to be taken—especially in biology. She felt doomed by the totally unacceptable grades she feared she would get in her tests and was unable to study effectively.

I advised her to work out a time schedule for the next few days, stick to it, and get the tests behind her.

"But I will get F 's in the tests," she wailed.

"You might," I said. "And if you do, you could live with that, couldn't you?"

"I've never had any F 's before in my life."

"And I don't think you will, not on your report card. But even if you did, your parents and your friends would still love you."

"I guess," she laughed. "But I still wouldn't like the F 's."

"My guess is that you would not feel as bad about F grades in your past as you do in your future. And you just might fool yourself and get better grades than you expect."

"It's just hopeless. Biology is just impossible for me. I'll never make it."

"One thing for sure. Fretting doesn't help. Studying might. So, study as best you can, and tomorrow morning get the first test behind you, and the next morning, another . . . "

She received F 's on both the make-up tests.

"Hey, I'm sorry about that," I told her, sincerely. "But it's behind you. And like I said, we still love you."

On the next regular exam, she earned a B and stopped by with a note to share her good feelings with me.

She came to accept herself, even with the F's, and this was helped along through acceptance in counseling.

Of incidental interest, she received nothing below a C on her report card.

RELATE

"Is that your cat?" some students ask, pointing to one of the pictures on my office wall. Then, time permitting, I tell of how I really wanted a dog, the circumstances that brought me Smokey, and how he learned to fetch but never could bark worth a hoot. And they tell me of their pets, present, past and hoped for in the future, and often, of their world at home in control of it all . . .

Others ask about the pictures of elk and bighorn mountain sheep or of Pilot Peak, and we briefly talk photography or backpacking in the high country.

We often find a common interest on the happy side to discuss, in addition to the problems they have brought to discuss.

And, as you have found already in this book, I am not above the old "I remember once when . . . " and sharing similar happenings from my own past.

This personal sharing is not always received well in the beginning. Some students are up to here with oldsters telling them how it was "when I was your age . . . " And some are so constricted within tiny, undernourished selves that they seemingly do not care about other people of any age.

But, for the most part, once they discover the spirit in which the sharing is offered, once they find the sharing offers understanding and not another put-down from an alien world, they usually respond and start to relate.

Not long ago while I was talking to an English class that had read a couple of my stories, the question came, "Do you believe in love at first sight?" Before I could answer, another, "How old do you think people have to be before they really fall in love?" And my impression was that the questioners were braced for another adult to tell them they were still wet behind the ears.

"Really fall in love?" I pondered. "I would be surprised if any of you have not already been there with that feeling we call love.

"I would never try to take that away from you. I am opposed to belittling the importance of caring in this world.

"I remember a lovely girl by the name of Mildred Phillips." I dreamt far from them for a moment. "And I can stand here now, and remember, and feel a happy shiver go up my spine just thinking of how she looked when I first saw her, next to an arbor of grape vines in my back yard, when I was *ten*. Don't let anyone try to tell me that wasn't love . . .

"This was not quite the same sort of feeling that I was discovering a few years later in high school," I continued.

"We really ought to have a lot more words than we do to use for the different loves that people feel. But there is no age when feelings suddenly become permissible . . .

"Now if you are talking about dating and following your feelings, we have something else to talk about.

"If you mean to ask how old you should be before you date, go steady, or physically express how you feel, let me offer a basic rule of thumb: You should be far enough along in the development of your life that you can be fully responsible for what you do. And the number of trips you have taken around the sun does not necessarily determine maturity or the earning capacity that is necessary to assume responsibility . . . "

Later, a number of students stopped by to continue the sharing that began in that talk.

My impression was that, for lack of adequate words, a bonding promise of need-fulfillment occurred in that brief encounter. The students, at least some of them, sensed an acceptance of their seldom expressed true feelings. They found the beginnings of the two-way-street or give-and-take relationship so important to us all.

Healthy, productive relationships involve both give and take. The two-directional flow is a part of being whole and real. And counselors should not feel they have to guard against being real people to their counselees.

Counselees quite naturally expect that counselors who genuinely care will share their own experiences, ideas, and values. Even though this may not always be apparent.

Of course, working with students who do not seem to want to relate tends to prompt the pearls-before-swine feeling.

At times we must remind ourselves that developing human beings are not assembled like a simple watch . . .

With rational expectations we continue to offer caring acceptance, relevant facts, potentially helpful points of view, and even references to our own experience in attempts to relate. In consequence, some counselees noticeably respond. And with some others, counselors continue to attempt to relate, with faith and hope that positive result may evolve from it all in the long run.

"That kid you say just stole a car," I once told a downcast counselor, "might have blown up the whole town if it weren't for you . . . "

Relate.

TEACH CONCEPTS

"What's a credit?" the question comes when eighth-graders are told how many credits are required for graduation. Terms and their definitions are indispensable in making sense out of educational planning and course registration procedures.

No less important are the concepts and symbols necessary to the students' understanding of everyday life.

Constructive thought cannot take place without an adequate set of ideas and understandings of what is happening, of what is normal, and of what is possible in the future. To be effective counselors must provide concepts and symbols with which to think more realistically about the problems under consideration, more functionally about human behavior.

For youngsters to continue to be traumatized by laughter in a classroom, for example, or to be drawn into fights by name-calling simply because they do not conceptualize what is really happening is ridiculous. They should be brought to recognize that those who laugh the loudest at the mistakes of others are likely to be those who feel the most uncomfortable about making mistakes themselves. All need the conceptual understanding that those who call people "chicken" or the like feel fearful and inferior, *project* their feelings onto others, and try to gain importance by pulling others down instead of working to gain genuine status.

Expecting that students will arrive already adequately supplied with rational concepts suggests an ignorance of what is going on in the world out there. And supposing that the teaching and use of behavioral concepts is somehow someone else's domain and ought to be reserved for college classes or psychotherapy is an idiotic cop-out.

Sound concepts should be made available to people as early in life as the concepts can be understood and applied meaningfully to the situations or problems at hand.

A few years ago I was visiting schools in Minnesota. An elementary school counselor left me for a time with a teacher who was conducting group guidance sessions with first-graders.

I was impressed by one word she was using—*frustration.*

"You don't feel that is too old for them?" I hear myself saying to her, now feeling naive.

"No," she answered. "It is a word that is a part of their daily experience."

"Tell me a little more of how you use it in their activities."

"Twice a week we sit in a circle on the floor, as I mentioned, in our group guidance activities. And just last week we were talking about how we might frustrate people without meaning to. I stressed how we should let people know when they frustrate us so they will maybe change the way they act, so they can keep us as friends.

"Monday I had some parents visit me, telling me I had a 'sex maniac' in my class and demanding he be removed.

"As it turned out, there was a little boy who they said was pinching their daughter's behind. I agreed that this was not acceptable behavior, but I made it plain that I did not think it was quite in the sex-maniac category. I said I would see that the pinching stopped and the boy was corrected appropriately.

"The next day we formed our circle, and I noticed the boy vie with others for position so that he sat next to the little girl. She edged away, like Ruth Buzzey as the little old lady in *Laugh In.*

"He reached, and I said, 'Mary, remember when we talked about frustration last time, of how, when people frustrate us, we should really let them know so that they can change their behavior?'

"Immediately, she turned on the boy and told him, 'Rodney, you are frustrating me. You are trying to pinch my bottom again. I don't like you to pinch my bottom. That frustrates me. So just stop it.'

" 'OK,' he answered. 'I won't do it ever again.' And that was the end of that. I hope." She crossed her fingers.

Adequate concepts make it all possible. A common base of understanding enables us to think together and communicate.

DEFINE RATIONAL REALITY

Misinformation and misunderstandings abound. Emphases are often misplaced. Dissociated values compound conflict with conflict. Profit-motive media create phony necessities which block satisfactions.

The counselees' initial perceptions of their world can be nine-tenths of their problems.

Misinformation inevitably leads to frustration and destructive tendencies. Uncertainty is frightening and anxiety-producing. Faulty orientations point people in the wrong directions and keep them from getting where they would like most to go.

Striving toward more rational and realistic views is much of what counseling is all about.

"I can't do the work in that class," the student says. "It's too hard. And I can't ask any questions in there. Everybody laughs at me when I ask."

Through counseling, the spoken or unspoken reality of this counselee might come to be more along the lines of, "It's hard, perhaps the hardest course I have taken. But my standardized tests scores suggest that I have the ability to do what is required. After-school help is offered by the teacher, and I have not been taking advantage of this. I haven't been taking homework home as often as I should. To succeed in this class takes longer than I am used to spending. But the word *can't* really does not apply. And as to kids laughing at me when I ask questions, it is not everyone who laughs. It's the few who are screwed-up and flunking, trying to project their stupid feelings onto those who are with it and trying to pass the class . . . "

"I have to fight after school tonight," says another. "That kid is bigger and stronger, but if I don't, I won't have any friends, and everybody will call me *chicken*. If I go to the principal or somebody, then they will get back at me even worse."

The rational reality to come out of counseling here might be, "I don't want to fight. I'm afraid. And it is reasonable to be afraid. I don't have any chance of winning, and win or lose, I would be suspended from school with my parents called in and the whole scene. . . . As for losing friends, what sort of friend is it that drops you just because you try to keep from getting your nose knocked in? . . . When it comes to being called chicken, it would not be everyone. And those who call a person chicken are doing it because of something inside of them, trying to pull others down in order to feel big themselves. . . . And on the question of telling the principal or somebody, I have a right to protection if I need it. There are always people out there to give you trouble if they think they can get away with it. If I feel I have to square off with every kid who wants to fight, I'm going to be bloodied up half the time. . . . Lib' or not, I don't think a girl should have to fight just to prove herself . . ."

"I couldn't have believed anything like this," comes one more, from a boy. "I do their lawn sometimes. Her husband is always real nice to me. And I feel rotten about it. But she's about as much younger than he is as she is older than I am. Then she invites me in, for a Coke, she said. Now, I'm over there after school every day when he's not there. She is absolutely the only one I've ever done it with. And I'm crazy jealous that somebody else has her and at the same time scared that any moment he is going to come through the door. So maybe I will try to get her to take off someplace with me. I wish she was five years younger, not married, and I was out of school and had a good job . . ."

The need for ombudsmen and child advocates may very well exist, to rescue kids and to help them get what they think they want. I do not wish to belittle or totally disclaim such a need.

More often, however, the need is for a confidential setting in which to face facts as they really are, breaking with the make-believe escapists and entrepreneur-defined insanity, and for continuing counseling opportunities to go on from there . . .

CHAPTER **SEVEN**

RESPONSIBILITY, ONE STEP AT A TIME

Bringing people to stand on their own two feet remains a commendable goal of school counseling.

No one has the right to anything for which he or she cannot be responsible. All else received are gifts from those who accept responsibility for others—all else, that is, except that which is stolen. And such understandings should be accountably advanced by the schools of America.

Children become men and women when they assume a just measure of the responsibility for themselves and for their world. They become worthy, self-respecting adults when their giving starts to surpass their taking and when they work to make things better rather than simply blame and expect others to make things better for them.

I recall being with the Drug Task Force of the 1971 White House Conference on Youth when a split-off caucus brought in its report, damning the establishment and demanding changes in the system, as the answer to drug abuse in America. The conference was all but over with many members leaving and with those still there quite worn. Amidst the jumble of chairs, Efren Ramirez, Puerto Rican psychiatrist from New York, patiently responded.

"I have found in all these years of treating addicts," he said, "that it wasn't possible for me to get the cooperation of the addict in his own treatment if I justified his illness on the basis of the reality of his origin. Now, I believe very strongly that the social, economic, and racial factors are very conducive to addiction and drug use and are primary targets for the prevention programs. But from the point of view of the treatment itself, you cannot treat an addict by saying, like, 'Yes, I understand. You have all the reasons in the world to be an addict.' That doesn't motivate much . . .

"I always point out that there must be something wrong with the way the person is thinking or feeling or integrating his thinking and feelings in his life . . .

"When I am very impressed personally with the background of an individual, I can see very clearly how the individual became addicted. I take a lot of care not to transmit that impression because it is very easy for the addict to utilize that as a cop-out . . .

"To pull one's self out of the hole of addiction is one of the most grueling, difficult things that a human being can do. So he doesn't need any cop-out."

Counselors help people to accept responsibility for themselves and to act to improve their situations. While emphasizing the positive rather than dwelling on the negative, counselors help them to explore, to discover purpose, to establish realistic goals, to develop plans, and to get into action—one step at a time.

EXPLORE AND DISCOVER PURPOSE

"Why didn't you do your homework?"

"I didn't feel like it," students have learned is a totally unacceptable reply—although it is the pure truth for many of them.

"A kid stole my book on the bus," the stories come instead. "I tried, but I didn't understand how to do it." . . . "I had it finished. It was in my locker, but not now. Somebody has my combination." . . . "I had too much other stuff to do." Or simply, "I forgot."

Some of the tales are true. But as often, they are excuses and rationalizations brought on by the demanding question, "Why?"

In trying to get an honest view of what is happening and prompt productive thinking, I have come to believe that more effective questions are along the lines of "What did that do for you?" Or, "What do you suppose that will accomplish?" Or, "What's the point?" Or some other variation of, "What is the purpose of that behavior?"

The distinction between ***why*** and ***purpose of behavior*** may seem fine and evasive. And surely the use of ***why*** is not taboo. But more times than not, as I have viewed it, ***why*** tends to dwell on blame and the past, while ***purpose of behavior*** tends to lead to understanding and looks to the future.

In counseling regarding homework not being turned in, "So here's the mystery as I see it," I might say. "I always work on the assumption that behavior is purposeful. And we both know you can do the work. You say you want to be successful in school, to pass, and to go on to prepare for one of the careers we have talked about. So what's your purpose in goofing off and not getting your homework done?"

"I don't know." . . . "I'm lazy." . . . "Trying to get out of work." These are a few of the preliminary responses. But then come the more meaningful ones.

"The truth is, I'm with kids that never take a book home, never do any schoolwork at home . . . " Or, "Things are so messed up at home right now, with my uncle over every night my father's on the road . . . " These and many more lead on to needed discussions in counseling.

"I don't like that teacher, and I can't work for teachers that I don't like," goes a common immature response. Counselors hear it in both junior high and senior high school, as well as in elementary, as though it is a final and complete explanation.

"I can understand that people find it more difficult to work in a class or on a job they don't enjoy or when they have a teacher or a supervisor they don't like," I am prompted to say, or words along these lines. "But this doesn't stop them. It might slow them down a little . . . Again, what is your purpose in not getting your work done? What do you get out of it?"

"I just don't work for them if I don't like them."

"You mean your purpose is to somehow get back at them because you don't like them?"

"I don't know."

"I don't see where your not working hurts the teacher all that much, unless the teacher really cares a great deal for you and feels badly when you don't complete your work."

"That teacher doesn't like me," some then declare.

"Which is understandable when you aren't doing your work," I comment. "At any rate, you don't like the teacher. The teacher doesn't like you. And then you don't do your work, and the teacher puts down a failing grade . . . Now if you didn't like a teacher and the teacher didn't like you, it would make more sense to do the work and make that teacher put down good grades for you. So it seems to me."

"I guess."

"Now, you are an intelligent person. I know that from your test scores, from what your teachers say about you, and from just talking with you. But there is a short circuit in your reasoning here somewhere. As I am hearing it, you don't like somebody so you hurt yourself. Where is the sense in that?"

"I don't know."

"It's like having a kid call you a name in the hall so you put your hand on the floor and step on it."

"Maybe." Some laugh. Some seem angry.

"Now, let's take it from the top again. What's the purpose of you not doing your homework?"

"I get to watch more TV," smiled one student.

"No purpose. Just dumb," said another. "I'll try to get with it."

And still another said, through shiny braces on her teeth, "It's more getting even with my dad for marrying this woman I *can't bear* . . . "

Exploring and discovering purpose helps to get at what we are about and moves us on to the crucial considerations of goals, plans, and action.

HELP TO ESTABLISH GOALS

"What do you want to be doing about ten years from now?" is a favorite question of mine. I ask it a number of times each day. Not because I enjoy the ring of it but because it prompts people to think.

"I don't know," is the most common answer. But even this one prompts thinking and provides me with information of a sort.

"That's what most people say," I note, assuring them that it is perfectly normal and acceptable to not know. "The fact is, I am more comfortable with those who say they don't know than I am with a few who tell me of very specific career goals and have closed their minds to any and all other possibilities. This is a time, I think, to shape some tentative, general goals in life but to continue to keep an open mind . . . "

But we do not leave it there.

"What have you thought about?" I ask, with a pace that suggests we have time to talk. Almost everyone has an idea or two to share.

"I'd like to get married," a girl said recently. "But I'm not supposed to say that, am I? I'm supposed to come up with a big status career, like nuclear engineer or brain surgeon.

"Well, I have thought on it," she continued. "Not to sound nicey-nice, I am a very religious person, compared to most kids around. And I would like to do some super great thing for the world. I would like to do some great thing that would turn it all around. But in spite of all those tests saying how smart I am, I can't. I just want to get married and try to be a good mother."

"How great can you get!" I found myself saying. "We need a few more dedicated parents out there. Do let me clarify that when we talk about your future, I am not trying to steer you into anything. You do indeed have the ability to be successful in many careers. Motherhood and family life might well be considered one of these."

"But then, like you said in the slide session, when we were doing our high school plans in group work," she told me, "most women will have times when they will not only want to work outside the home, they will have to."

"My very words," I acknowledged. [See Appendix C.] "Do you expect to go to college?"

"The four years, anyway."

"So among your goals, at present," I reviewed, "are a four-year college degree and a family."

"Right," she smiled, seeming more at ease than she had been when we started the interview.

"What do you think you will want to study in college?"

"It ought to be something that will enable me to go out and get a job. One that won't bore me to death. Maybe nuclear engineer or brain surgeon," she laughed.

Later on she settled on social worker as a tentative goal . . .

Students need to be going somewhere they want to go. They need to find directions, see where they are going, have things to look forward to, and know purpose in what they are doing.

The good life is not just a matter of being—here and now. And it is more than behaving in such a way that we avoid painful consequences, even though this is an indispensable part of it.

As Freud told us, the superego is more than a conscience. It involves the ***ego ideal.*** More than just the fear of punishment and our desire not to do wrong that control behavior, our ambition, our striving to become the best we can become, to actualize in terms of our own values and goals, also, has a part.

"Are you serious about him?" I asked a girl near what I thought would be the close of a short interview, on the day of this writing.

"I wouldn't want to marry him," she hunched a shoulder.

"Do you plan to marry?"

"Oh, yeah. Sometime."

"What do you think you want in the sort of person you would be willing to spend the rest of your life with?"

"I don't like boys," she evaded. Then quickly, "You know I don't mean that. I just don't want to get involved with a guy. Not right now. I don't think it would be good."

"You don't want to answer my question," I reflected.

"I sure want something better than what I have going now. And I'm really screwing things up. You got an hour to talk maybe?" . . .

Through counseling, students develop, revise, refine, and further utilize goals.

"What's ahead?" the questions arise, seeking answers. "Where are you going?"

"Go toward something," I find opportunities to say. "Not just away."

"What are you *for*?" I ask. "Only dwelling on what you are against doesn't help. Find something to work for, not just something to destroy."

And in the last resort category, if no other goals come out of the session, it does not end there. If the counselee continues to draw a blank on better times to look forward to, at least there can be, "See you next Thursday, and we will take it from there."

EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE

"How are things going?" I ask.

"About the same. Maybe a little better, I guess. No big trouble."

"Mr. Murphy mentioned you had a passing grade on a test yesterday."

"Just a D," groaned the student, looking up sideways to see how I was taking it.

"A big step up from F's"

"My mother doesn't think so. She says that's still a failing grade as far as she is concerned."

"Your mother wants the best for you. And we know you are basically capable of higher grades. But it takes a while to shift gears and get back on the track. You've had some heavy things on you, but you're working again. And it shows. Mr. Murphy is pleased with you, that's for sure. I think your mother is, too. She just wants good things for you."

"I guess."

"And as you say, no big trouble . . . "

Just as things get worse and worse when people are caught up in the frustration-aggression cycle, they can get better and better when we emphasize the positive. Just as a minor frustration can snowball into big trouble, a little success and good feeling can snowball into life being better all around.

But it takes someone to notice and care.

Even though we must be aware of the negative aspects of our existence and must deal adequately with realistic threats to our safety and well-being, equally important in this day and age is our awareness of good things. An urgent need exists for the recognition and emphasis of the positive.

Of course, in any area approaching values and judgment of same, concepts need to be defined. People will debate as to what is positive. And the answer depends on affective conditioning, on what people have learned to feel and favor through past experience.

Although not quite from the dictionary, my functional definition of ***the positive*** is that which prompts good feelings rather than bad, *that which helps rather than hurts.*

But even with this definition as a guide, different people travel different roads. Some, for example, see escape through chemicals as pleasurable and helpful—which it surely can be, at times, from some points of view.

Look further. The positive approach must always take into account the long-range result . . .

This is another of the problem areas to *figure out together* within the counseling setting. For different people, the routes, the views, and the conclusions may be expected to be somewhat different.

In any event, dwelling on the negative does not help. When nothing else seems to be in sight, ease away, and move to a positive orientation.

"As you say," I observe with students every school day, "things are not happy for you." The problems may be in class, at home, with relationships with others, or with confused and faulty definitions. But in due time, after adequate acceptance of the problems for what they are, I ask, "How do we make things better?"

Attempting a hard sell that everything is rosy, when from the student's point of view it most certainly is not, seldom improves the situation.

But when nothing seems available to praise, nothing happy, nothing good, make room to ask, *"What can we do to make things better?"*

The question is resisted by those who would rather waste time rehashing blame and wallow in the imperfections of the world. But here is something worth dwelling on, a question is always worth an answer or a quest for same, an activity is always worth the time and the creative investment.

"What's your plan?"

HELP THEM TO DEVELOP PLANS

"What I am going to be is a veterinarian or an actor." These are commonly declared goals. Or, "I'm going to get off this stuff and never go back." But the pronouncement of goals will not in itself make it all come true.

A few things have to happen, and a few things must not happen if people are to attain specific goals.

And in all happenings in life, the element of chance prevails. Life is not always what we try to make it. Too much seems to be beyond our control. But we certainly can do much to improve the odds.

We can plan.

Actually, a lot more planning takes place than many kids grasp and recognize.

Without planning, absolute chaos would result, unimaginable in our relatively well-ordered world.

"I don't plan anything," I have had students say in evasion. "I just kind of let things happen."

"That is spooky," I am liable to respond. "You turn your freedom over to other people? And how do you get around?"

"Huh?"

"I mean, you find your way around school alright?"

"Sure."

"So your lack of planning is not to that extent. You have a mental organization worked out up here," I touch my frontal lobe, "so that you get around to your classes and find your way home."

"Sure. I mean, like if we are going on a trip, I like to just take off instead of planning."

"And if you end up at the city dump instead of Yellowstone National Park, or maybe run out of gas in the desert without any water along . . . "

"Well, you know, I understand there are things you have to look out for."

"Then, it is only a matter of degree," I conclude. "I can't help but wonder whether a little more planning last year might have made school happier for you this year—since now you tell me you wish you had taken different courses."

"Maybe. Like I'm at the dump instead of Yellowstone."

Then we get down to the education plan worksheet in front of us.

In some cases the planning involves a worksheet, to help us keep track of details and alternatives.

Sometimes the plans are clearly tentative, merely ideas of what could be—more a mental exercise to develop patterns of rational action, in preparation for possibilities in the future.

Sometimes they are relatively firm, written decisions for detailed courses of action.

Through planning, counseling brings increased system and order. Frames of reference are developed which enable students to function in a more rational manner.

To my way of thinking, even role-playing is a form of planning. In this, patterns of behavior are developed for use in future problem situations.

The point of planning in counseling is not to end up with paper plans—although paper and pencil can help in the process. Planning establishes neural patterns or intelligent organizations of thoughts, ideas, and knowledge within the counselees which may be used by them in solving problems and/or in reaching declared goals.

Indeed, not all plans are followed. And this suggests all the more reason for the exercise of planning.

A major purpose of the activity of developing plans is in the vicarious experiences provided. In imagination, counselees come closer to the reality of what may be involved.

The students planning to be veterinarians and actors, for example, may have second thoughts once they review what is required to reach these career goals.

Students confirm, revise, or reject various aspects of a given plan, or reject it all, including the related goal.

"Sometimes we climb mountains," I have occasion to say to students, "to learn that we do not want to ever climb them again."

Sometimes we live through an experience in our imagination and decide we do not wish to live it in real life. We simply give the future enough thought through planning that we are motivated to work out better ways . . .

ENABLE ACTION

"Lights, camera—"

Without the ***action*** it just isn't going to happen.

One of the most disillusioning experiences suffered by beginning counselors is to see everything worked out in the office interview, to receive sincere commitment to change, and then to find the counselee going right back into the old defeating ways once outside the door.

And, of course, it does not happen only to beginning counselers.

"All my life I have spent cleaning people up," a drug abuse therapist from the hospital at Lexington once told me, "only to have them go back and swim in the sewer."

The sewers out there are partly to blame. The peer groups and the social circumstances are powerful influences. Some counselees go back out into their world like Pavlov's dog went back into the laboratory, spontaneously responding to the sweet hum of the tuning fork as they learned to do in times before. But more exists to cause the lack of positive change than set and setting, more than past conditioning.

For some students the tasks, the pressures, the conflict, the distracting physical urges, and the demands of authority, collectively, are overwhelming. They can well understand the need for change in their behavior. They can commit themselves to goals, sincerely. But they cannot bring themselves to do all that needs to be done, even though all they have to do is do it.

Or so it seems.

All they have to do is what successful people are doing, and all will be alright. All they have to do is what the teachers, parents, test results, counselors, and they themselves say they can and should be doing, and at least their academic problems will be solved. But somehow things don't get done. Even when they try harder than they have before, their teachers report, "Doing absolutely nothing in my class."

Where is the answer? Not on one or two pages in this book, that's for sure.

But part of it, a very significant part, is the simple rule, ***one step at a time.***

Even though no hard and fast sequence may be called for, students should guard against letting themselves get bogged down, attempting to take on too many things at once. In enabling action, nothing is more crucial.

Little is accomplished by getting after students who have not done what they were supposed to have done. The emphasis must be on the future, on what is to be done, specifically, ***one step at a time.***

In doing homework, for example, the first step is to figure out what the teacher wants done, assuming the student is far enough along to care and want to pass. Next is to learn how to do what the teacher wants done if this has not already been accomplished. . . . Steps continue, including such things as opening the book and getting a heading on the paper, all the way to preserving safely the completed work and turning it in at the appropriate time and place for credit—an obvious concluding step where everything breaks down mysteriously with some students, as though destructive forces were at work preventing success.

Complimenting the rule, ***one step at a time,*** is another so age-old it tends to be trite and ignored. It goes, ***a place for everything and everything in its place.*** Although the thought is rebelled against and rationalized to the contrary, it remains a prerequisite for efficiency in this world. And when attempting to enable success, it can be indispensable.

Twelve-year-old Galen first came to my attention, routinely, as a boy not doing his homework. His teachers were understandably frustrated by his apparent refusal to keep his mind on his studies. At times he forgot to bring the right books or even paper and pencil to class.

In a few brief interviews, we looked at what he could be doing, one step at a time, to do better in math and English. Improvement soon became noticeable in these two subjects, as he gave consistent attention to bringing the correct materials to class. I praised him accordingly, regretting the lack of praise forthcoming elsewhere for "barely-passing work when he could be doing at least average."

"Hey, can I talk to you?" he blurted in our fourth interview, in the midst of attempting to work out another step forward in English. He had missed turning in an assignment again.

"I guess I thought you had been talking to me," I smiled.

"I mean about other stuff. I don't know what to do about after school today."

I closed the folder in front of me, pushed it to one side, and tried to focus on what he was saying.

"There's this kid, this friend of mine, next door to where I live. You know him, I think. But I don't want to say. Alright?"

"Whatever you want. But it helps me understand at times if I know who we are talking about."

"Roy Gordon," he said, or at least that is what I will call him here. "I might as well lay out the whole thing."

Roy was a year ahead of Galen in school and one who I knew the teachers would have termed a good student with no problems in school.

"Well, he's been getting some grass, and we've been smoking after school. His room or mine, depending on whose parents are not home from work. With incense, you know. But now there's another guy Roy brought in on it, and we go over to his place. Most of the time. Roy was getting the stuff from him, I think. And he's got a bunch of magazines."

"Magazines?"

"And videos . . . You are going to think I'm—" Galen hesitated. "I don't know. But anyway, Roy and I have kind of done things together. And now Jake is into it with us. Jake Lorenz is his name. Do you know him?"

I didn't.

"He's older than Roy. And kind of rough. Mean. Cruel is what he is. But with all the pictures and smoking pot and all . . . It's something to get away . . .

"Would you believe," he said, "six months ago I didn't even know the word? Masturbation. I didn't know what would happen, how it felt, or anything.

"But all this isn't the problem, or why I maybe really need to talk with you about it," he talked on, gaining momentum.

"My problem is— There are two. First Jake tells me I should bring my little sister with me tonight. And the other is, last Monday I got sick in school and went home in the morning, and my dad and Roy's mother were there. She was running naked to the bathroom when I came in.

"She comes out of the bathroom with her clothes on and tells me, 'Don't tell Roy.' And my dad yells at me, 'What are you doing home?' And I tell him that I'm sick. And he says he doesn't want to smell any more incense around the house and I better not make him draw that out for me.

"And there's a third problem. Right?" added Galen. "I'm flunking school. And I can't think. And I don't know what to do about nothing."

And I said, "One step at a time. First, let's look at your situation coming up this afternoon . . . " And we took it from there.

Soon after, a concerned teacher asked, "Did you give him a good kick in the right place to get him moving?"

"He's in motion," I answered. "But he has a few heavy things on him right now that may be expected to hold him back from concentrating on schoolwork . . .

"One step at a time," I said again. "Play it by ear." Then we got down to specifics on what might reasonably be required of him in class . . .

We cannot rationally expect kids to effectively pay attention to more than one thing at a time. Demanding that they turn it all around and suddenly do everything they should be doing only compounds their problems—problems of which we are seldom totally aware. But with the word ***action,*** the ball is very much at their end of the court.

Accepting students where they are, as validly as we can determine where they are, we try to get the action going in a positive direction.

IMPERATIVES IN EFFECTIVE COUNSELING

Reviewing the thoughts shared here so far, I find interest in discovering what this one practicing counselor has put down without referring to duly respected writing elsewhere.

The anecdotes do not precisely illustrate the central ideas. Not as well as I would like. But they are the happenings that came to mind during the writing. And something of truth may be gleaned from this.

The happenings of the counseling workday do not neatly fit the theories and role prescriptions we receive in training. On this I am sure all counselors would agree. And so I stand with what I have rather than change from imperfections to imperfections in other dimensions.

With no inference of prescribed order and with full recognition that the considerations are often overlapping in practice, I believe the following considerations to be ***imperatives*** in counseling effectively:

Minimize threat.

Maximize freedom.

Provide confidentiality.

Listen.

Empathize.

Accept the person.

Relate.

Teach concepts.

Define rational reality.

Recognize responsibility.

Explore and discover purpose.

Help establish goals.

Emphasize the positive.

Help develop plans.

Enable action, letting ***one step at a time*** be the rule.

Counseling is many things—depending on what comes through the door and what is happening with the students, the school, and the world.

Utilizing the considerations listed, now termed ***imperatives,*** we accept students where they are, as validly as we can determine where they are, and we try to help them get the action going in a positive direction.

Action, then, is the last of the series of ***counseling imperatives*** I am suggesting—a sort of climax to all the others. Also, it is the first of the seven elements or areas of basic need in the approach to understanding teen problems and reaching out for solutions, to be offered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER **EIGHT**

REALITY IN OUR FUN-ORIENTED SOCIETY

In spite of the bombs, environmental abuses, and other massive threats to our survival, or perhaps as much because of them, ours is a ***fun-oriented*** society.

Our forefathers declared our right to the pursuit of happiness. We all want to enjoy life. And when attempting to define rational reality in viewing either the individual case or our collective circumstance, it is well to begin with this recognition.

"My folks never let me have any fun," kids tell us. And, "We weren't having fun together anymore so we split up." . . . "I hate school. It's no fun." . . . Or in planning, "I want to have a little fun before I have to settle down." And then time is now to try to get at what we mean by ***fun.***

Let me borrow from a book I did for teens on the subject, *For the Time of Your Life.*

In this I assert that there are seven basic ingredients—whether we are talking about a brief activity or the totality of a person's life. Twenty years ago, *Scouting* magazine tagged my article along these lines, "The Teen-Fun Formula."

Reducing the wide spectrum of good times to a single word and a formula of seven elements is an oversimplification, of course, as is any attempt to conceptualize the dynamics of human needs and behavior. But at the very least, the so-called formula may be thought of as a collection of headings with which to explore problems and seek solutions. What unfolds is that our consideration of these seven areas of basic need may be seen as a valid, productive approach to counseling.

The seven are shared here much as I share them with kids, both in group work and in individual counseling.

ACTION

On top of the list is the word ***do.***

Action—mental and/or physical—is necessary in order to have fun.

Bored kids, lolling around, watching a TV program they don't even like, quickly find they are having much more fun once they get into motion and start to do something.

A boy and girl, each alone, stand on opposite sidelines at a dance, miserable and woebegone . . . Then, somehow, one or the other gets across the floor, the two begin talking, they dance, and the world comes alive . . .

The class is boring . . . But then, a hand goes up, a student raises a thought-provoking question, everyone joins in the discussion, and suddenly it is fun . . .

However, as you know, to get kids into motion is not always easy. The problem, in part, is inertia. A jolting shove is often needed to get the action started, especially with those who have been inactive for a time.

Slumps are easier to slip into than out of. In this modern world so many things tend to minimize the *do,* the going action. Video, movies, radio, tape decks, and cars—these and more, all tantalize and entertain but can minimize genuine activity.

With our good life, many people tend to feel that they should magically be provided fun and happiness without effort, as a baby finds a ready nipple when hungry and a warm blanket when chilled. But those who find satisfying good times have come to understand that they must be active participants in their entertainment.

Of course, times of relaxation have a part, times to watch the clouds change shape and the vapor trails streak across the sky, times to lean back and think deep thoughts, and times for reading and finding adventure and challenge through imagination. But even the active mind and certainly the quiet times should be balanced with physical activity.

The most satisfying time to survey the beauty of the countryside is after the walk to the park or after the climb to the mountaintop.

LEARNING AND DISCOVERY

The same old stuff gets tiresome.

Kids are more inclined to perk up and join in when something new is to be learned or hints suggest that something of interest or value may be discovered. A new sound in music, a new dance step, a new skill, a new place to go . . . It might be a new idea, or it might be a new understanding or an awakening of something so old that it can be new all over again.

In spite of traditionally voiced dislike and resistance to schoolwork, people enjoy learning. It is a natural function of every normal, developing, healthy person.

With younger children, the questions flood without end. "Why?" "How do you do that?" "What is that over there?" And on and on.

Then, at a time in their development when they might be expected to ask more, they all but stop.

In the early teens comes the intensified fear of being laughed at, of letting it be known that some things still are not quite understood, and of admitting that they are not as sophisticated and grown-up as they feel they should be. They hold back from asking questions about their most pressing concerns, sometimes because they lack the courage, sometimes because they doubt that they can get a straight answer worth the embarrassment of asking. But the questions are there, underneath, seeking answers.

Later, with increased maturity, they still tend to be reluctant to ask. The old reasons are still present. Also, they are better equipped to work out answers for themselves, and personal, active discovery is more fun.

Methods change, but learning continues to be an enjoyable experience.

"What's new?" they say. And a walk around town, a show, a class—these are empty things when nothing new is learned, when no discoveries are made. But let the walk lead to a new friend, the plot work out in a new, intriguing way, or the class turn up a practical answer to a personal question, and suddenly, it's fun.

EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Probably most associated with what people think of as fun is ***emotional experience***—so much so that they are inclined to equate the two.

Fear, anger, love, hate, orgasmic release . . . Even the words tend to rouse us.

The drive toward excitement and emotional expression is in everyone, young and old, demanding outlets. Though sternly suppressed in some, it is there. We could not survive or continue the species on this earth without it.

Of course, combat and coitus are not imperatives for there to be fulfilling emotional experience. Perhaps the most common emotional experience in the good times of people is laughter.

(Let's hear it for the next summit meetings to open with Laurel and Hardy movies.)

Emotional expression through laughter releases and eases tension. In ways differing from person to person, humor has a wonderful way of letting the unbearable become laughable and of helping us cope with forbidden fears and urges.

And since counselors need to have a functional understanding of laughter and to pass this understanding along to kids, let us dwell a bit more on this here.

Appropriately or inappropriately, at what do people laugh? (Maybe, at awkward evasions of ending sentences with prepositions?)

"We laugh at things if they are funny," the kids often answer. Then I have to ask, "What makes things funny?"

For one thing, we laugh at the mistakes that people make. Sophisticated people laugh at the more complex errors of intelligent people. Dull and immature people laugh at almost any mistake or failing they pick up, even those of the handicapped and disabled.

We all have deep feelings about not being quite as capable as we want to be. We have all made mistakes of which we have been ashamed. And seeing someone else foul up and appear even more foolish or shameful than we feel can plunge us into sudden bursts of laughter.

We laugh at the important. Pulling people down from their pedestals through humor always has seemed to be great sport, unless we identify with the particular hero, idol, or leader in a way that brings us down with the same blow.

Most of us give way and laugh at frightening things, when we are removed a safe distance.

We laugh at things related to sex. All of us have repressed things related to our elimination functions, our sex organs, and our urges to perform forbidden acts. Some repressions occurred long ago as a consequence of no-no's emotionally imposed by grown-ups when we were little. And still hidden within the unconscious, unable to be brushed away with mature logic, they continue to exert irrational pressure that can be triggered over and over again through humor.

Linked to the basic sources of laughter, is the complicating tendency of inertia. To let go, be expressive, and join in can be difficult. And on the other end of it, once in motion, maintaining reasonable control can be equally difficult.

Of course, moments and situations arise where joining in may be a little too easy.

Among the teens I have asked about laughter and what they thought it was, one answered, "Imitation.

"Say you are sitting with some people," he told me, "people you want to get along with, and they smile, so you smile back. And one of them tells a joke, and they laugh, so you laugh. Maybe you catch on, maybe you don't, but the other kids are laughing so you laugh.

"It starts out small," he continued. "Not very loud. Maybe to start with, it is kind of hard to laugh. Then it gets easier. Too easy . . .

"Once I was at a party where I was having a great time, and all of a sudden I was laughing at a boy because he has this white, freckly skin. They were making up dumb stories about him, and he was my friend. I really liked this guy, and here I was laughing at mean things they were saying about him.

"We got off to something else, you know. But it was hard to have fun the rest of the evening. I felt cheap about it, that I could find myself doing something I didn't want to do, as easy as that. It was scary is what it was . . . "

Without adequate restraints, the action can get going the wrong way and/or go too far. But attempting total avoidance of emotional involvement breeds frustration, unhappiness, and hate.

Opening up to emotional involvement makes possible all those peak experiences that rejuvenate and make life worthwhile.

"Wednesday night is prayer meeting," a lovely black girl once told me. "And I don't want to miss that. That's where I get my battery charged to see me through the week."

THAT NEED TO BELONG

George sat on the bleachers by himself for a while at the after-school dance. Then he pushed up and strode out onto the floor. Moving through the crowd, he paused to stand with one cluster, and another. Few acknowledged or returned his smile. No one spoke more than to return his quiet "Hi." He danced one dance, with a girl whose distant gaze conveyed that she was not a friend. Alone, he stood by the far corner door for a few long minutes. Shrugging, he turned and left.

It is no fun when you feel you don't belong.

After that dance, I learned later, George met some other kids, kids who accepted him, but who he had been trying to stay away from, kids he had been in trouble with before. Again, this afternoon, they did things that George really did not want to do. And again, they got caught . . .

The need to belong can affect our well-being in many ways. The force of it is apparent at all levels of the ***hierarchy of needs*** (outlined in Chapter Two).

Meeting our most basic ***biological*** and ***safety*** needs requires the cooperation of other people. A reasonable measure of belonging at these basic levels is necessary for the continuation of life.

Love and ***esteem*** have as their essence the caring, the warmth, and the interacting friendship of those around us. During the teen years, most of our needs to belong are in these two areas. And throughout our lives, here is where we associate the concept of belonging most frequently.

Finally, ***self-actualization*** requires the acceptance of people in unique and special ways. An author, for example, who attempts to actualize through writing cannot reach this goal without the acceptance of editors and readers. Or stated more aptly, "It ain't no fun writin' if ain't nobody going to read it."

Fun is impossible when we feel shunned and rejected by those around us.

The host or hostess who neglects newcomers or who doesn't make the rounds, being sure that everyone knows each other and that no one is left out of things, has fallen short. The discussion leader who fails to guarantee that each and every member of the group has a fair share of opportunity to contribute has likewise fallen short.

Good times happen in the company of people who accept us. We are most likely to have fun with our family and friends, with the people we have shared our fun with in the past and with the people it will be shared with again in the future.

A VOICE IN WHAT'S GOING ON

"We never get to do anything we want to do. Always somebody is there telling us, 'Do this. Do that. And don't do this and that.' And that's no fun . . . "

Teenagers are famous for wanting to do their own thing. They don't like to be pushed into doing things they don't want to do, things that someone else thinks they ought to be doing.

However, this can take some sorting out. Kids can be so caught up in the need to belong and in the inertia of the going action that they throw away their own individual voice in what they are doing. Defying authority becomes a guiding force rather than free will. They give up the opportunity to do what they want in the long view and soon find they have run out of fun.

"So there we were," a girl told me. "Stuck up there in the jail for three nights, and Liz says, 'Nobody's going to tell me what to do. I'm doing what I feel like doing, and when I feel like doing it.' I couldn't believe this! That is crazy, crazy, you know? I felt like asking her if being here, with bars around us, no phone, and this crummy, hard bunk, and cold, open stinking john, was what she felt like doing. I didn't, but I'm not running with her anymore . . . "

We all want a *voice* in our own affairs, but in order to have fun in the long run we have to give reasonable thought to what that voice will say.

Rights and freedom are relative, limited, and inclined to disappear when abused. Kids need help in understanding this if they are to exercise a voice that will enable the genuine, long-lived fun they will really want to have.

In any event, voice is an indispensable element of the formula, and kids should have a substantial part in deciding what they will do. They should have a part in the selection of their activities and in the work involved—before, during, and after.

When adults take over too much and try simply to *give* good times, without the kids themselves having a part all the way—

Thud.

BEING SOMEBODY

Remember back in gym class or on the street when the kids chose up sides for softball? Remember the one who was not chosen? Maybe you even had a turn at being that kid. I don't have to tell you, that kid didn't have much fun—unless some enlightened leader-type assigned him/her to be manager, first base coach, or bat person, or scorekeeper, or umpire, or some other somebody.

You cannot have much fun if you lack significant, healthy identity. The world is a sad and empty place when you do not feel you have a meaningful part in it.

A girl I will call Cheryl comes to mind, a girl who exchanged a "Hi" right and left as she walked down the hall. Cheryl likely held the record for the frequency of a girl having her name linked romantically with different boys in the fun talk and notes that went around.

The pathetic part of it, however, was that as far as most people were concerned, it was all a joke. Cheryl had few real friends. Her features were short of handsome. She was decidedly overweight. Some kids and some adults cringed at her overtures and laughed at her behind her back.

But she was somebody. Everyone knew that Cheryl was someone special . . .

Another time, another place, I recall, a junior-high-age boy had a unique way of ending his school day, behind the school.

"*Ah-roooom,*" Rob would warm up, with his arms spread wide like the wings of an airplane. Then he would taxi east to the end of the field.

Kids used to line up and wait outside to watch the takeoff.

"*Rrrrrr,*" he would turn. "*RRRRRR,*" he would gain speed down the imagined runway, bank to the right at the sidewalk, and fly north toward home as fast as he could run.

In both Rob's and Cheryl's cases, people who were understandably concerned came to me and asked that I talk with them and tell them that they were just making fools of themselves, that people were laughing at them. But I declined to confront the two and take away their imperfect, unrealistic identities.

I might have been able to get them to look in the mirror and put aside their fantasies, but, for the moment, I had nothing better to offer them in return. The temporary somebodies they chose to be were no worse than many of the more common variety, and probably more fun.

I did see them both a number of times, of course, helping them work toward more rewarding identities in their futures. In truth, I envied Rob, his having a plane out there behind the school, and most of all, his soaring flights off to the north.

What is being somebody?

For people on the edge of starvation, fighting for breath beneath a cave-in, or free falling with a bad chute, the all-consuming challenge is to live through the current crisis, to continue simply to *be*. Applying the hierarchy of needs, the most urgent need can be to simply manage to be *somebody alive*.

But for those of us thinking about the subject while writing or reading a book and functioning beyond the basic biological and safety needs levels, the answer lies within a more highly developed self. The judgment and the feeling of whether or not we are somebody depends on the contents of the self and the values placed on the people and things with which we identify.

For some, being somebody seems a matter of belonging to the crowd. For some others, to be loved by one alone can be quite enough.

For others, clearly, this is not enough. They must have widely recognized accomplishments, popularity, leadership opportunities, and power.

How does a person get to be somebody in this world?

Some try retreating to childhood, regressing back into the time where others took care of them, where they had no obligation to assume responsibilities, where others did the thinking for them, rewarding them when they were nice and punishing them when they were naughty. Of course, those who do this do not admit it, not even to themselves. They dissociate and unconsciously shape rationalizations.

"Look, look!" some are inclined to say. "I am the great and powerful, beautiful, sexy *Me.* Give and I will surely give you nothing in return."

Others reach out to belong to groups with whom they can emotionally identify. They join causes that will accept them. Not all such identities and identifications are positive and constructive, but not all are negative and destructive either. Most have extensive rationalizations to support their total worth.

"I was nothing," a lady told me in my old neighborhood in San Francisco, "until I started going to the People's Temple, with Rev. Jones . . . "

And some clearly identify with the future and find meaning in sublimating their energies into the long, complex preparation for responsible citizenship.

Everybody has to be somebody. To just kind of hang out as a nobody is intolerable. Even being something that is bad seems better than being nothing.

I have seen it happen over and over, a boy or a girl transfers in from out of town who has been in trouble or victimized and who wants a fresh start. The main office personnel keep the secret. Yet, after a few short days, or minutes, it comes out that the student is telling it around . . . "On the drug scene . . . " "Ripped off three cars . . . " "On probation . . . " "Gang raped . . . " "The 'juvenile' they told about in the papers . . . " Every known secret and more are "confided" in people the student does not even know.

The need to be a notable somebody can be compelling.

If people cannot be what they want most to be, they will be something else.

When being or becoming a successful, contributing individual does not seem possible, then an inadequate victim, a failing sponger, or a violent militant may very well evolve.

Those refused as friends may be expected to become enemies.

The inevitable consequences are easy to see. When people are out of it and refused significant, healthy identity, dynamics come into play that can hinder everyone's fun . . .

THE LOOK AHEAD

If you have to break, swing to the sign that reads, "Hey, more to come, right after . . . "

In a number of ways, the concluding ingredient in the best of fun is tied to an intelligent recognition of the future. Good times never end. Each one includes a look ahead to even better times.

To make the point when talking to groups of teens, after having outlined the first six ingredients, often with too few minutes remaining before a passing bell—

"OK, now just for fun, I want to talk only to the girls. Boys, don't listen.

"Girls, I want you to think of a boy. Not just any boy, but *the* boy. And if you don't have one already in mind, put one together in your mind. Just the right eyes, and hair, and, all the rest.

"Now I want you to suppose you have a date, with this perfect guy. This Friday. Or some Friday off in your future if you aren't ready for a super date just yet . . .

"He's got the car . . . And away . . . " keeping this rapid-fire example down to the bone. "There is ***action.*** No just sitting around. You do things . . . There is ***learning*** and ***discovery.*** Not just the same old stuff. You do new things, some things you have never done, ever before . . . There is ***emotional experience.*** The music is exciting. And afterwards, the moon . . . There is an incomparable feeling of ***belonging.*** I mean, not mommy-and-daddy stuff, great though this may be, but different. At times during the evening you experience the most intense feelings of belonging that you have ever known . . . There is surely ***voice.*** You do what you do because you want to do it. Not just because he wants to do this or that, and not because your parents want this or that . . . And as to ***being somebody,*** there is a special new identity tied to this new relationship and his wanting to be with just you. And, then, there is a moment when you happen to drive by girl friends, they see you, and you kind of give them a little wave, like a princess to her subjects . . .

"All of the first six ingredients for fun are there.

"Now, you are at the door, and he is about to shake hands good night." Appropriate tense laughter, and groans. "Or whatever. And you are expecting he is going to say, 'Maybe we could get together tomorrow afternoon?' Or, 'Could we do this again next Friday?' Or at least, 'See you in school Monday.'

"Instead, he says, 'Well . . . I really had a great time. I really like you a lot. And I guess I want to share something with you . . . I never believed in love at first sight, you know. But . . . But you know that girl who transferred in from Walnut Creek on Wednesday . . . And when she walked into our English class I just knew . . . And I asked her out, for tomorrow night, and would you believe, she accepted . . . And . . .' "

"And POW!" said a girl in the front row, slamming fist against palm, when I put this to a class a couple of months ago.

"Suddenly," I said, "it isn't fun anymore. In fact, some of the happy things you did together you may now wish you had not done at all. You may even have regrets about what, at the time, seemed the best.

"Good times don't end. They flow on to happy memories and more good in the future.

"And so there is a seventh ingredient.

"The Look Ahead," I said, printing it in big bold letters on the board. And sometimes added, with the passing bell ringing in my ears, "To be continued."

That which *ends*, just plain isn't any fun. For those who want to enjoy life, it is absolutely necessary to plan ahead and do things to sidestep those empty, "What-now?" feelings.

And there are worse feelings.

Considering the fun date one more time, regardless of the thrills experienced, if the evening is plagued with feelings of guilt or fear and dread of consequences, it falls short. Or, later on, if the evening's action results in serious regrets, if after the chemistry dies down she wishes they had not done what they did, or if it becomes apparent that he really was not as serious and genuinely involved as she supposed, then fun turns into bitter feelings at the opposite end of the scale.

Life is an on-going process, and the joys of living are forever linked to both memories of the past and outlook for the future.

THE TEEN FUN FORMULA

An oversimplification, indeed. Uniquely individual, personal problems can interfere with a person's capacity for having fun. And catastrophic world events surely can put a damper on what can be.

But even in the more complex situations, keeping these seven areas of need in mind can help. The fact is, when things are a bit on the complicated side it is especially important to apply rational concepts with which to think and to consider situations point by point in terms that are understood by those involved—***one step at a time.***

When seeking fun as an individual, or when planning group events, meetings, conventions, or anything where you want people to have a good time, the answers can be found in well-rounded activities that

1. keep people in ***action***—physically and/or mentally,
2. offer opportunities for ***discovery*** and ***learning,***
3. provide genuine ***emotional experiences,***
4. foster a feeling of ***belonging,***
5. permit people to have a ***voice*** in what they do,
6. recognize them as significant ***somebodies,*** and
7. give consideration to the ***look ahead,*** both in avoiding regrettable happenings and in leading toward happy, worthwhile things to come.

The seven-point fun formula works.

It applies both in having fun during leisure time and in finding success in the world of work. It applies in the one-step-at-a-time planning of a full and happy life.

It can apply in the guidance of students on a group basis. It can apply as an approach to the counseling of individuals.

USING THE FORMULA IN COUNSELING

I had used the formula in group work from the time I put it together in the '40s. But I had not been aware of using it in counseling until the late '60s, a number of people shared with me how they were using it, having discovered it in my first book, *For Thinking Teens.*

"It started," a welfare social worker told me, "with a girl, very depressed, 16-going-on-30. She had run away. And her home life was rotten enough that I couldn't argue that it was anything else but that. I openly agreed to the obvious, that things were not happy for her. Then I said we were going to work together to try to make things better.

" 'What do you want?' I asked her, thinking she might want first and foremost to move out. I had a foster home in mind.

" 'I want to have some fun,' she told me. 'I'm so bored I can't stand it.'

"And picking up on the word, fun, I mentioned I had just come across a formula for fun in a book I was reading and suggested we might go down the list of elements together.

"She showed little interest, but more than before, and that we did.

"First I read the list all the way through. And this went nowhere by itself. Then we took each of the elements, one at a time, and talked about whatever came to mind and seemed to apply in her situation.

"In ***action,*** for example, we got off on what she could do and what she couldn't. We recognized the increased restrictions on her because she had run away. But we noted there were many things she could still do that might be fun. Or rather I did the noting at this point, and she wasn't buying. So I moved us to a few things she could be doing that might improve her situation and make fun more possible and likely for her in the future.

"In ***learning and discovery,*** I discovered there really were things she liked in school, courses she felt were worth the effort, and teachers and students with whom she related . . .

"And when we were on the ***belonging*** and the ***being somebody*** parts of it, she started telling about a couple of truck drivers she was with for a time.

" 'They really cared about me, you know,' she said. 'They dumped me off. They didn't want to go to jail, I mean. But they gave me some money, twice as much as I needed to get back if I wanted. I felt I belonged with them more than I feel I belong at home. And when we were doing stuff. I mean when I would go to bed with one of them, he would tell me how great I was. It wasn't just getting laid. I mean I felt like a goddess with all the sweet things they would say, and how I was making them so happy. Like a movie star or something, instead of a pile of, of the nothing that I am . . . '

"When we were on ***voice,*** I tried to point out how there is always a limit on what a person can do and that when you go too far there is a reverse effect, where you find authority comes in so that you end up with less voice, less freedom than you had before . . .

"On ***emotional,*** she said she didn't think she really needed a lot of excitement. Then she contradicted herself and talked about how she stirred up trouble when she got too bored. Then we talked quite frankly about sex . . .

"When it came to the ***look ahead,*** she was more reasonable and willing to try to work out solutions than I had guessed she would be when I first brought up the formula over an hour before.

"The whole thing led on to our meeting a week later to review progress, where we talked through the formula again. And this time when we reached the ***look ahead,*** we got down to some specific long-range planning . . . "

To me a certain thrill continues in using the formula as a guide in counseling, so simple it can be, yet so effective in getting at what is happening and why, and in moving toward making things better all around.

This is especially true when working with kids and their parents in drug-related problems. But we will talk on that in a later chapter.

CHAPTER **NINE**

SEX IS NO FOUR-LETTER WORD

"Sex is a *natural function*. It's in the book. Right? And fun is the name of the game," a bright young lady once confronted me. "So?"

"So let's think on it," I responded, and we went on from there . . .

Reality-testing is ever active among young people in the maze of conflicting feelings and contradicting emotional pronouncements thrown at them at every turn.

They have demanding sexual needs that some of them see totally blocked by taboos, that some give expression with blends of fear, ecstasy, and guilt, and that some do not even recognize for what they are.

Definitions of the supposed norm come from the pulpit, from television drama, from the most far-out news available anywhere, from published behaviors of politicians and beauty queens, from the lyrics of whatever entrepreneurs are moving at the moment, from what the parents have said and have not said, from advertisements, from rumors in the halls, from the wisdom of peers, from sexual abusers and those warning against them . . . The list could go on and on, even to include an occasional sex education class.

The kids are told things are bad that their senses tell them are the most wonderful discoveries of their lives. And they are told quite the opposite as well.

Some have seen photographs of nude children by Will McBride in *Show Me!* and by writer Lewis Carroll or in family nudist magazines and see such images as wholesome and naturally attractive, while some others have been taught to see nakedness as ugly, to be restricted to scenes of violence and screaming little Kim Phuc running down the road from napalm.

Some have seen little more than underwear advertisements, and some have seen explicit video cassettes.

Some have not yet experienced orgasm. Some have, in a variety of settings and circumstances.

Some have experienced drug highs they find to be more enthralling than sexual orgasm and without the risks and taboos they have been brought to associate with sex. Avoiding the risks of pregnancies, some find outlets which are both praised as beautiful and condemned as abnormal.

Some have experienced physical and emotional pain related to sex and must be rescued from traumatic circumstances.

Some kids have sexual experiences with people they love and respect and are told that these people are criminals because they have provided these experiences.

Some actively seek orgasmic episodes with adults and are told that, no matter what, all blame is unconditionally upon the adult.

Some learn that both being terrorized and being lovingly fondled are the same thing, ***abuse,*** in the eyes of authority.

Some come to reason that the greatest pleasure and happiness in life is evil and slip to fascination with demonology and devotion to the devil or to saving cults.

Some want desperately to find someone with whom they can confide, someone who is both knowledgeable and caring.

Some live in fear that their secrets will be found out and guard against talking with people in offices.

And some have secrets they keep even from themselves, secrets of shame, repressed, pushed down by childish selves in times past, secrets that may never be aired but will continue to prompt ambivalent hate and constrictive behavior.

Amidst this emotional confusion, an adequate functional orientation in the area of sexual concerns is a requisite.

But taking it back thirty years from this writing—

CONSUMING CONCERNS

A long time ago, before we had anything approaching the special education opportunities now available, there was a boy I will here call, Arlin. He was one who was placed in a special room at the seventh grade level as a social promotion, one who it had been judged would not profit from repeating the sixth grade another time.

Arlin was not seen as much of a problem in the school. He did not do very much of anything and was relatively unresistive. Working with him was described by the teacher of the special room as "like trying to push a piece of damp spaghetti uphill." Some said he should not even be in public school.

Arlin took at least a full minute to write his name.

"I'm sure he is bright behind it all," his teacher said. "He just doesn't respond."

After talking with him a couple of times, I attempted to make a referral to the only agency in town providing psychological services. They were doing some play therapy successfully at the time, and I had the thought that, through this, they might be able to communicate. But after an initial evaluation, they refused, being overloaded, and concluding the prognosis in any such attempt was failure.

I continued to give him an opportunity to talk and periodically tried to maintain an accepting relationship with him.

Reaching out for things to do, I tried to give him an MMPI, verbally, since he appeared to be unable to read. His responses to this personality inventory totally confused me, until I discovered that he was mixing his answers up by dwelling on some of the past questions and giving answers that applied to them out of order.

Drawing hints from his scrambled responses and from my knowledge of an older sister, I noted that he was quick to come alive whenever the subject of sex was mentioned. When something related to sex was touched on, he began to talk more rapidly and continued to talk and be intelligently responsive until we were off on tangents away from the subject. I found that each time we moved the discussion toward a sexual area, he would speed up, until again he had talked himself away from the subject.

Soon after that first session of playing this game, his teacher came down and asked, "What on earth did you do with Arlin today? You really must have struck a nerve."

"What happened?" I asked, braced for some sort of negative acting-out reaction to it all.

"He asked me what we had been doing while he was gone. He asked me what he had missed. My word, he has not been doing a thing in that class since he arrived. What did he miss? Of all things . . . But just to see what would happen, I told him the problems we had covered in his absence. And would you believe it? He sat down and did the problems. Problems I did not even think he knew how to do."

In later sessions Arlin and I continued to touch on sexual concerns. In time he felt more free to talk and asked some elementary but pointed questions about sex. Eventually, the narratives came, from his immediate experience.

The happening which seemed to be his central concern at the time involved his sister and older brother putting him to bed early, "like I was a little kid," and after they checked to see if he was asleep, which he pretended to be, they proceeded to play naked sex games. On at least one occasion, he asserted himself and asked to be included. He was refused and threatened. His view of it, tearfully expressed the first time he brought himself to tell, was not that something bad was going on but that he was being coldly rejected from being included in this fascinating activity.

Suffice to say, Arlin was helped, much of it through a nonthreatening setting in which to discuss his concerns, as he saw them, with a counselor who accepted him as a significant person.

He found he was able to pay more attention in school and progressively did better and better, earning his way through high school with adequate achievement.

I remember him stopping by a few years after those sessions in the seventh grade to tell me of his A in Algebra . . .

Through it all and through many events involving other counselees since, this counselor has become increasingly convinced that many kids are hampered in their schoolwork by frustrated needs that demand their attention and energies, keeping them from sensing the needs we see for them in the classroom, and that untold numbers of these needs and frustrations are sexually related.

ON NATURAL FUNCTIONS

Sex is a natural function, confirms Dr. William Masters. Without the urge to procreate and the natural bodily function to make it all happen, we would not be here today.

This hardly needs saying, so obvious it is. But it is a fair place to start, a base on which to build, a something that bears repeating when kids bring sex-related concerns. Once this basic fact of life is genuinely accepted, most questions are on the way to being answered.

In attempting to minimize threat and get through the inevitable defenses, I sometimes turn to drawing parallels between sex and other natural functions.

Consider the function of eating. I suggest, using this example in group work.

One would be safe to suppose that in prehistoric days, then-less-intelligent humans just reached out and grabbed the food in sight, eating until their appetites were temporarily satisfied. They ate on impulse, when food was available to eat. And when not, they hunted it down, ruthlessly. They felt like eating, so they ate. They refused to be delayed. They devoured their food with little thought to how they might appear to others. They ate for physical satisfaction, devoid of aesthetic pleasure.

Now, most people eat with more restraint. We need food to live, but we control our behavior to answer other needs which are higher in the hierarchy of needs. We eat food which we have a right to eat. We wait to eat in accordance with our customs. We have standards of cleanliness. We know that some things are not good for us to eat and that some things make us sick. We enjoy a wholesome pleasure in eating the right foods at the right time and place. We have learned that food tastes better in the right atmosphere and when shared with people we care about and trust. And we know the consequences of disobeying reasonable rules concerning food and eating. These range from embarrassment to disease and death.

In prehistoric days people satisfied their urges with not quite the same consequences as today. But times have changed, people have gained increased intelligence, and impulse has had to give way to patterns of restraint—in areas of both eating and sex.

In our complex culture, years of preparation are necessary for responsible adulthood. Early marriage is seldom the best idea. And "free sex" is still the most expensive kind.

Venereal diseases (not just AIDS) and unwanted pregnancies are the most glaring expenses. Less noted but just as real are the sexual bonds created and the trauma of deceptive one-night-stands.

Of course, eating and sex differ substantially. We must eat regularly in order to stay alive. The sex urge lends itself to greater control and to indirect enjoyment and expression.

However, the parallel can be helpful in getting sound ideas across to kids and, with differences duly noted, continues to apply.

When ambivalence and conflict accompany eating, or sex, long-lasting problems tend to develop.

The small baby whose mother is unwilling to make feeding time a loving time, for example, may learn lasting feelings that the world is a cold, unfriendly place and that he/she is unworthy of being loved.

The teenager whose dinner hour means family quarrels, angry criticism, and stuffing the food down as fast as possible to get through and away lives in a different world from those who leisurely enjoy meals and pleasant conversation about mutual concerns with people who show that they truly care about each other.

Having a happy life is obviously impossible if the natural functions of the body are associated with discomfort, anger, guilt, or fear.

Sex is no exception. It may be many things to different people. But for everyone, it ought to be ***fun.***

And this opens a readily acceptable approach to discussing sexual behaviors with kids.

THE LOOK AHEAD

When going through the list of the seven areas of basic need, adding up to ***fun,*** it may be best to move the seventh to the top of the list. The key to lasting fun with sex is to see beyond the moment. The guide to the right and wrong of it is in ***the look ahead.***

Sex differs from eating and other natural functions in that it can be postponed indefinitely. This makes it no less a very real need, but it can be controlled, so that all the other six basic need activities can be such that they enable rather than obliterate the look ahead to a happy and fulfilling sex life.

The look ahead depends on beginnings to a very great extent. *Where people find sexual thrills and orgasmic satisfactions, happily or unhappily, they will return in reality and/or in fantasy again and again in the future.*

Pre-readiness experiences are awkward and limited at best. Pre-marital and extramarital sex typically require little or no commitment, where total devotion should be. Deception and nagging suspicions are common. Feelings of guilt, ambivalence, and a desire to break away may dominate, instead of feelings of joy and the expectations of new and better things to come, together, throughout life.

Initial moments have a way of being lasting. First impressions count. And initial sex experiences have impact on future attitudes and feelings.

ACTION

Sex, as eating, is something to do. It is an ongoing, grand, feeling-good opportunity for action, with or without primary goal orientation.

Everyone has experienced moments of idleness, attempting to fill the void with something to eat. And most of us have had a few turns at filling it with sex . . .

"What it comes down to," a high school senior once told me, "is if the girl can carry on a conversation, I don't get carried away. But sex is there, if nothing else. And I'd rather do that than drugs, so—"

Indeed, sex is there, with driven action for every participant. It is there for each to work out in ways that seem right and best, or to simply let fly for the moment.

Acts which risk terminal disease, ties to shallow people, and conception of unwanted children are more than foolish, regardless of the rationalizations used to try to excuse regretted behavior. Vicarious experiences, alternatives to penetration, sublimations, and masturbation are readily available and matters of personal decision.

In deciding the action, kids should be brought to view both the self of today and the self of tomorrow, the tomorrow they will enjoy or bitterly endure after the thrills of the moment have subsided.

They should know their own taboos and not violate them. They should avoid circumstances which prevent them from being in control of the action.

They should guard against the inertia of the going action bringing them to share orgasmic experiences with people they will not want to remember with such closeness always . . .

DISCOVERY

Learning and discovery are very much a part of sexual experience—the unfolding, the reaching out to find even greater heights, the tragic learning that things can't be undone, the discovery that more exists than was supposed could ever be, the quest of how to make things better—no matter how great or small they are presently . . .

And all of it is made even more intriguing by the teasing obstacles in the game.

Books and television inform and misinform. Observing, listening, rapping with friends and relatives, and experiencing the functions of their own bodies add to their orientation. Then eventually, the opportunity arrives to discover physical sharing with another being.

But at any stage of their education, kids are liable to have a problem in not realizing what they do not yet know about sex.

"I am thinking," a boy told me in a time of discovery, "that if you really care so much for a girl that you would want to spend your entire life with her, you would want to have peak experiences with her that you would know she has never had with anyone else. Just yours, you know? And I'm not talking double standard. It should be the same for the man as for the woman. So they could unfold sex together . . . I have messed myself up on this. And so has the girl I am going with now, I know. But I can see that's the way I wish it could be, now . . . "

Or as a girl said she was told by an older sister, "So sure. Go ahead and invent the wheel all over again. Lots of people do. But I wish you could learn by listening and maybe be happier than I am with my life . . . "

EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

The emotional experiences of sex, undeniably, head the list of functions and activities that may be considered fun—unless ambivalences and conflicts, conscious or unconscious, take too much away, and, of course, unless somewhere along the hierarchy of needs other natural functions override and dominate the moment.

Not having had any food or water for a couple of days, being suffocated, wanting to escape intense pain, or having to go to the toilet could surely take the fun out of it.

But as a rule, sex is the greatest, so much fun that some, in this reading, will have taken exception to my calling it ***fun*** instead of ecstasy, rapture, transport, or indeed, a glimpse of heaven.

Not just the final orgasm or the release of tension is enjoyed, no more than with eating, the point at which a person is finally full. The state of emotional excitement and certainly the sensations of stimulation are to be enjoyed.

Still, emotional states are preparations for an act—for the attempted fertilization of the ovum. And substitute activities, compensatory alternatives, or intended prohibitions against extended stimulation should be worked out in advance by anyone who does not wish to be drawn into sexual intercourse.

Again, sex is subject to individual control.

People can be angry and not attack in this civilized world. They can suffer fear and not run away. And they can be sexually aroused and not have sexual intercourse.

Kids need opportunities to think things through in advance of moments of decision.

BELONGING

Sex can provide a feeling of belonging beyond comparison.

Sex creates bonds between people, I assert in group work and in my writing, then go on to suggest why this might be.

The prime purpose of sex is creation of life. But as sure as reason and order rule the universe, the purpose of sex is more. A human child needs more than to be given breath. A child needs parental care in the early years of life. Sex has a part in building relationships that keep couples together and make possible the care and counsel necessary for the healthy upbringing of the young. Sex fosters and fortifies love.

I assert with the kids that everyone with whom they have a sexual experience becomes a part of them, of their self structures, in a special way they can never escape.

As many a person has discovered, these emotional ties are not dissolved by decisions to break away and switch partners. Nor are they magically banished forever by pretentious ceremonies. The bonds persist in varied, subtle ways, both within the thoughts of the individual and beyond, in the thoughts of new and old partners.

"Wow, I wish she would stop calling me. We agreed to split. I don't want to hurt her, but I care a lot about the new girl, now. I'm really serious about this one . . . "

Or, "And I want it to be perfect and beautiful and sacred with my husband. I do. And then fantasies start flooding my mind of the times with Hank, and I feel rotten and guilty and just want to die . . . "

Or, "She and I more or less slept together weekends the first quarter of our sophomore year in college. Then according to our agreement, she started trying out other guys. We were both to have complete freedom. But it is tearing me apart. Like I wouldn't have believed it could . . . "

"So we party, and nobody owes anybody anything," some tell us. "Just for kicks . . . "

But when ties are created that are unwanted, when intense emotional experiences of the moment must be rationalized away, and when the feeling of ***belonging*** is missing in ***the look ahead,*** the fun goes out of it and is replaced by despair.

Of course, people are different. They have somewhat different needs. They have been taught differently about sex and love. They have experienced different things—happy things and unhappy things.

And people differ physically.

But the tendency for sex to form ties persists. The memories linger on, regardless of differences and in spite of the confusion created by misinformation, guilt feelings, and conflict.

Now, whether or not these emotional bonds should be called ***love*** is a matter for individual judgment. Long debated is the question of how much of the feeling we interpret as love actually stems from a rationalized sex urge in search of expression.

No matter what, sex builds bonds between people.

And as our counselees come to agree, belonging where you don't want to belong is a terrible limitation on fun.

BEING SOMEBODY

"Don't ask me to turn off Timmy. I was nothing 'til he came along . . . "

A feeling of significant identity comes with a loving sexual experience. It can mean self-discovery unsurpassed.

The question arises, however, as to who people become through their sexual experiences. Values enter in, and the sort of persons they want to be. When sex helps them be and become what they want to be, it is fun. When it draws them into being self-despised and keeps them from being what they want to be, it is a hellish waste and an obstacle to having fun in the future.

Worthy identity in our own eyes and in the eyes of others has much to do with sexual conduct and with sexuality.

We are all sexual beings, born male or female.

Women are women in many, quite different ways. Men are men in many, quite different ways. And we come together as sex partners in many, quite different ways. The societal limitations on how we become and gain feelings of worthy identity are fewer than ever before.

Within these expanded dimensions are fantastic opportunities for fun. But there are pitfalls and false prophets. With new freedom comes responsibilities incomprehensible to some. Being a happy somebody through sex requires intelligence and love, and often caring counseling along the way.

VOICE

"I really like to screw!" a fourteen-year-old girl told me not long ago, in answer to my stock question, "What do you do for a good time?"

"Then, I'm really doing what I want to do," she told me. "At home, people always telling me to do this and do that. And at school. But when I'm with guys, it's different. I'm in control. Doing my own thing.

"Usually," she added, with a trace of discomfort in her smile. "Usually . . . "

"For sure," I said, "sex is fun when it is what you want to do.

"In contrast, it can be terrifying or depressing if it is something happening against your will, or if afterwards you have serious regrets.

"The deciding voice in what, when, where, how, and with whom can make all the difference in whether it is fun or not."

Then, finding I still had her attention, I said, "And there is the fact that *you*, the *self* over there we have talked about before, may have a different view of what you want when you look at it a couple of years down the line . . . "

The feedback counselors provide during the counselees' reality testing should define sexual relations as ***relationships***, indeed, that people enter into because they want to and because the circumstances are such that they will be glad forever after. Never because they are pressured into doing things they don't really want to do. And never out of rebellion or because those in authority say they should not and try to deny their supposed rights to fulfillment.

"Well, I wouldn't have done it," a junior once declared. "I sure wouldn't have gone all the way with him. Not with him. But I'd had a big hassle with my parents that night, and this was my way of telling them to go to hell, you know."

Perhaps most important, and perhaps most impossible, for counselors in defining a rational reality, is to help kids see the long view, to capture a glimpse of what they will feel and want for themselves down the line.

What they choose to do now is their ***voice*** in what will be, and this needs to be put in front of them at appropriate times.

In attempting to offer guidance in such matters, I find myself saying, "Hey, I don't want to just get along with you now, today. I want you to be able to look back a few years from now and be glad about what happened."

The look ahead continues foremost.

Misuse of voice now can result in a helpless lack of voice later.

SEX AND THE PRACTICING SCHOOL COUNSELOR

"I've only been out of it once," said a girl who had come in supposedly to discuss friends she felt were hurting themselves through drugs. After a time she moved to talking about herself. "Just this once I didn't know what was going on."

"What were you using?" I asked.

"Vodka," she told me. "He made me drink a whole bottle. To teach me a lesson."

"A lesson," I reflected.

"He wanted me not to drink, he told me. He wanted me to see how dumb I'd act, and then not want to do it again."

"I'm not sure just how you were supposed to see yourself, after a bottle of vodka . . . "

"He had a camera. You know, video?"

"Have you seen the recording?"

"Well, that's what—"

At this point we were both aware of movement just outside the office. I opened the door and found a student waiting to see the counselor whose office was across the narrow hallway.

Restraining my familiar fury with distant administrators responsible for the inadequate facility, I asked the waiting student to move back to the makeshift line on the wall, out of listening range. But when I went back in my office, that was the end of it. The student did not feel she wanted to talk anymore on the subject . . .

It was two months later we found she was being sexually abused, by her father . . .

After years of requests to administrators and school board members and repeated documentations of need, now that school has a waiting room and an arrangement providing privacy . . . And I have been assigned to a different building.

While the counselor's functional orientation is basic to what happens in counseling related to sexual concerns, beyond this, other factors enter in and determine what will be.

The physical setting can be a severe limitation. And on the other side of the coin, as I rediscovered with the modest expansion noted, it can stimulate open discussion of concerns as they really are.

"You must be very pleased to get the health and guidance area expanded," remarked a colleague, "with a waiting room, more office space, and a couple of cot rooms for the school nurse."

"Indeed," I answered, then found myself saying, "about like I'm glad a father I know has stopped raping his daughter."

Of course, the physical plant is only one of the delimiting and/or enabling factors.

Another is the counselor's assignment, the job description, or work load. Adequate time must be provided to talk and to think, rather than simply process.

And closely related is the kids' attitude, the counselees' definition of the counselor and what counseling is all about.

"Every time I try to see her, she is always busy. She doesn't care . . . "

"When we do talk, there's always somebody busting in . . . " Interruptions can murder otherwise good counseling.

And as a woman in her twenties told me, "So this counselor was chasing me down the hall about signing up for classes and applying for college. But she didn't have any time for me to talk about how I felt. About how I was coming apart inside. And at that time, starting to mess myself up with some people I didn't even like. I didn't want to talk with her anyway, not about what was happening. She was for writing college recommendations, you know . . . "

If we are going to be of help, the kids must see us as offering acceptance, understanding, intelligent guidance, and confidential opportunities to talk about things as they truly are, from their points of view, with increasing insight, one step at a time.

Specifically, somehow they must discover that to talk about sex with the counselor is all right.

Once they sense this, the openers come in a variety of ways.

"It's that I forgot my Pepsi. I always take one in this big bag I carry. But I forgot, and now I think I'm pregnant . . . "

"It was just another pajama party. No boys . . . And you are going to know I am crazy, cutting my wrist just because she gave me a hickey, and I liked it . . . "

And we take it from there, with consideration given to all those counseling imperatives and the seven basic areas of need, with special emphasis on ***the look ahead.***

Sex continues to be a challenging concern in counseling, much more involved in the problems of the day than usually recognized, often worked around and ignored, naively supposed to be unrelated to the "laziness," "underachievement," "suicides," and "chemical dependencies," demanding our attention.

CHAPTER **TEN**

SEXUAL ABUSE

"They got to do more about catching those weirdos you read about in the papers," one high-school student told me, "but if they think they have to put every kid who gooses his sister in prison, they're out of their heads."

Without question, school counselors are not going to turn it around and call a halt to the wide spectrum of happenings termed ***sexual abuse.*** However, they should have functional orientations in the area that go beyond a crisis number to call, and the cop-out, "That's not my business!"

And much more is needed than declaring the guilty must be put in jail to do much of anything about the problem.

In shaping a functional orientation, a reasonable place to begin is with the basics—what we understand through logical theory and what we find in practice. In my own case, working with kids through the junior-high and high-school years, I have known both juvenile and adult victims and juvenile and adult offenders.

Reaching for the basics, ***sex is a natural function*** . . .

Sexual abuse, it follows, is abuse of or related to this natural function.

But far too many events are jammed under the heading of ***sexual abuse***—ranging from exposure and touching to torture and the most heinous rape. And then, probably some other things should be but apparently are not. The term is confused and autistically scrambled.

In attempting to put together a logical orientation that can be shared, again the eating parallel may help. For example, as forcing unwanted food upon someone is an abuse related to the natural function of eating, forcing unwanted sex upon someone is an abuse related to the natural function of sex. Or as enticing someone to eat tainted food is an abuse, enticing someone to participate in a sexual activity that will be hurtful is an abuse .

However, inevitable limitations do exist to the parallel. A child might be considered abused when deprived of food, for example. But when someone, underage, is *denied* sexual activity or sexual knowledge, this is not considered abuse, even though the deprival may not be consistent with the individual's expressed wishes. Quite the contrary. Society's rules for minors are such that keeping them from sexual activity of any sort is a goal rather than an abuse.

Blanketly, in definitions of sexual abuse, children are never seen as having voice in allowing sexual activity and never having any responsibility for same. No matter how sexually assertive children may be, the assumption is that they do not fully comprehend and should never share the guilt involved—unless, of course, they are seen as the abusing offenders and are significantly older than the victims . . .

"But why would anyone do something like *that*?" Questions, spoken and unspoken, are endless.

Any attempts at suggesting cause lead to oversimplification, but in general, the major factors may be said to include ***predisposition, insufficient inner control, opportunity,*** and ***lack of realistic understanding,*** a lack which can lead to ineffectual and/or destructive actions by those who must cope with the problems at hand—not only the victims and the offenders but the caretakers and the general public.

PREDISPOSITIONS

In this, at least two factors are at work—an attraction to children and an active sex drive and/or interest.

Including but beyond the concepts of ***fixation*** and ***regression,*** is the recognition that an attraction to the beauty, innocence, animation, and becomingness of the young is a part of any normal person. Within families, for example, members experience natural attractions, curiosities, and affections, with matter-of-fact touching, potentially stimulating exposure, and expectations of loyalty. And some experience, at least temporarily, the attraction of dominance, of having power and knowledgeable influence over the young and helpless.

Again, sex is a natural function, involving an active drive toward fulfillment. It calls for outlets and repeated satisfactions and is subject to demanding frustrations. Where culturally acceptable releases are ill-defined and/or unavailable, alternative avenues will be sought, consciously or unconsciously. Once orgasmically rewarded, even taboo behaviors will tend to be established and defended through rationalization.

By their nature, sexual encounters, within and outside of marriage, make the participants physically and psychologically vulnerable. The devastations suffered by many men and women in their sexual experiences with peers may well cause them to reach out to youngsters, many of whom seek attention and have awakening sexual needs of their own.

Similarly, adolescents may be prompted to seek and sample sex with younger children.

Consistent with the hierarchy of needs, once orgasm has been achieved and the basic need is satisfied for the moment, a different frame of mind may prevail, temporarily, which may evoke different responses with different people in different settings, but as with all basic need-fulfilling functions, the desire will be renewed. The distant threats of punishment by others or of self-retribution are not adequate deterrents for offenders.

In addition to the predispositions of offenders, any adequate view recognizes the predispositions of potential victims, as well. Even though doing so may not be popular in some circles, the inclinations of potential victims should be noted squarely if we are to head off trouble for kids.

While in no way excusing offenders, a recognition must be made that some victims and some high-risk potential victims may have predispositions of sorts, in their needs for love, attention, and excitement—actually, in each of the seven basic need areas stressed in this book.

But here, in seeking causes, we are speaking primarily of the offender—an adult or an older, stronger, and/or more knowledgeable minor, commonly three or more years older than the victim . . .

INSUFFICIENT INNER CONTROL

Tiresome to assert, but true, people tend to do what they feel like doing. They tend to act on impulse. And those working with young people today are quick to tell you that acting on this tendency is on the increase.

"Fly now," in one form or another, is before kids at every turn. Reinforced by the drug scene, instant gratification is a common expectation.

Inevitably, a significant cause of sexual abuse is lack of impulse control. Contradicting, some tell of offenders following calculated plans and not just giving way to momentary impulses. Both views are valid, of course, depending on the orientations and the circumstances of the offenders.

OPPORTUNITY

Children are more and more likely to live with a single parent, to be unattended, or to be left with questionable caretakers.

"We can go anyplace," kids tell me. "Nobody's ever home during the day."

Automobiles, especially vans, provide instant isolation.

Both the settings and the availability of children provide vast opportunities . . .

LACK OF REALISTIC UNDERSTANDING

Many people lack a reasonable set of concepts with which to think realistically and productively about human behavior. Their recollections and perceptions are autistically restructured to answer their own felt needs. In sexual areas many are struggling with their own suppressed urges and with repressions, explosive reaction formations, overcompensations, and tendencies to viciously scapegoat.

Confusions, disagreements, and distortions abound. Some, for example, suppose that correlation is certain causation, that K mart underwear advertisements or X-rated films are somehow to blame because offenders may have evidenced interest in such things . . .

Some seem ignorant of such basic concepts as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, for example, missing the fact that until basic biological needs are satisfied, a person may not be expected to sense such higher needs as love, esteem, and self-actualization.

Some potential offenders have not learned that feelings, taboo attractions, and tendencies to err are inevitable but that maturity or growing up, perhaps more than anything else, is a matter of exercising intelligent control over one's behavior.

Decision-makers and law-makers apparently do not grasp the total picture of what is happening to victims. Children are being traumatized by the system in the aftermath. Some, for example, are held in an atmosphere of anxiety and required to prepare to testify against a loved one over a period of months or even years. The extent of sexual incidents which are now being defined as sexual abuse within families is far beyond anything that can be adequately addressed by the police and the courts . . .

The frequent assertion that "children *never* lie about sexual abuse" casts doubt as to the validity of those attempting to combat the problem.

"I'm not comfortable with this. She made me promise never to tell anyone," I remember a seventh-grade teacher saying, before the time of laws requiring the reporting of suspected abuse. "But I know she has talked with at least one other teacher . . . She is involved in some sex things with a lot of boys . . . I really think you should talk with her . . . She doesn't open up right away. Just lets you know she is troubled. You kind of have to ask her questions . . . "

Later in the day, I saw the student and started with, "One of your teachers asked me to get acquainted with you."

"Which one?"

"From the looks of your report card, it could have been anyone of them," I evaded. "What's happening with you lately?"

After a waiting silence, I said, "Here you can talk about anything you want to talk about, Sharon, but you never have to talk about anything you don't want to talk about . . . "

And after more silence, a different silence than most, with her looking at me, searching my eyes, I said, "So if you don't want to talk to me, I'll give you a pass back to class. Understand that if you change your mind, stop by and see me."

"I want to talk," she said.

And so she did . . . But later, contradicting her stories, a medical doctor who examined her made it very plain that it was out of the question that any of the repeated penetrations she related could have ever taken place.

It was found that she had sought out a number of other faculty members, swore them to secrecy, and then answered their questions as they supplied the possibilities of what might be troubling her . . .

Children do lie, on occasion. They can be prompted to say things that are not true in attempts to answer their own felt needs, in any of the seven areas of basic needs. And once they have lied, at least some find it very difficult to untangle it all and tell the truth.

It is downright painful to watch some of them build rationalizations to defend their stories, destroying relationships with friends and teachers as they go. When I sense this is happening, I sometimes mention truth. More often, I try to break the cycle, asking, "So how do we make things better?"

This is not to say they should not be listened to. Their reports and even hints should be investigated. But some do lie. They distort. They become confused. They say things to please, to avoid punishment, to get even, to be the center of attention, and to manipulate. Their recollections may become ***autistically restructured*** so that they may actually believe fiction to be true happenings.

PREVENTION

Recognizing the aforementioned causal factors contributing to the sexual abuse of children, any attempts at conducting preventive programs should include

1. altering and/or shaping ***predispositions*** and sexual preferences;

2. developing ***inner control,*** defining consequences, and enabling alternative outlets,

3. diminishing ***opportunities*** by requiring closer supervision of children by aware caretakers, and

4. arriving at and teaching an adequate core of ***understanding.***

While we may never prevent most of what is now termed "sexual child abuse," we should gain intelligent control of the aftermath once discovered—at least to the extent that the system does not further traumatize victims in the process of investigation and/or prosecution.

Recognizing that everyone is a potential offender, a K-through-12 comprehensive integrated life education program should be provided in the schools in which realistic sex information is a part. Decision-makers should accept that *some things are more basic than the 3 R's.* Schools must serve to provide both information and positive attitude formation related to the satisfaction of basic human needs . . .

Counselors should be more readily available to all students in the school, with training, competencies, and recognized authorization to work with the very real problems of students and their families, instead of being overwhelmed with clerical registration duties and the like.

Laws which provide counselors with the privilege of keeping confidences should be reaffirmed. Contrary to conflicting legislation, victims and young offenders should not be denied confidential counseling help because of the fear of being reported and all that goes with it. And young offenders should be able to identify past victims without fear of prosecution, so that the victims may be offered help.

The best minds available should be coming together on how we can reach young offenders early or even before they first offend and turn them around, with the goal of rescuing thousands of victims before the fact—victims who, otherwise, may become offenders in due time.

The infuriating fact of life is, of course, that it is next to impossible to get adequate support for a successful program of heading off trouble that is not evident because it was headed off . . .

Lastly, regarding ***prevention,*** any attempt at a scholarly view must include mention that "sexual child abuse" is dependent, more than we wish to admit, upon definitions and points of view. It might be viewed, for example, that circumcision should be included as a viciously maiming and traumatizing incident of sexual child abuse, or that a boy's first orgasmic experience, instrumented as a moment of discovery by a loving older sister, should not be viewed as a criminal offense at all.

Also, as we view ***the look ahead*** for those who have been sexually assaulted, might inadequate teachings and misguided attempts at treatment which limit or hinder future sexual fulfillment be considered sexual child abuse?

Adequate ***functional orientations*** are imperative for counselors, teachers, and parents who work in the area of prevention. And all do, inevitably and unavoidably, with sins of both commission and omission . . .

AFTERMATH

In order to enable treatment, adequate concern for the victim should be insured to prevent establishment-invoked trauma. To assert treatment while compounding conflict in the life of the child is absurd.

The day of this writing, for example, I found one of my counselees being forced to miss a track meet she had been training for, because of an arbitrarily scheduled treatment interview.

"You don't understand, Mr. Peters. This is ***treatment***," said the caseworker when I called.

"You don't understand. This is ***trauma***," I said in much the same tone. "The kid has been working up to this event for weeks. And she surely needs more right now than dwelling on what happened with her brother." I was about to go over the seven areas of basic need with her.

"I'm sorry to be such a thorn to you," I said, instead. "I know you are swamped down there. I appreciate all the good work you are doing, but I have to go over your head on this one." I did, and the interview was rescheduled.

At times we need to ask, "What's happening?" And even, "How can we make things better?"

Complying with laws, as soon as abuse is suspected, the counselor becomes the ***reporter.*** Later, he/she may again become counselor or general supporter, but as soon as abuse is in the picture, the case goes to a Child Protective Services specialist, a caseworker.

The caseworker then promptly meets with the child, making a determination as to appropriate action—often, immediate removal of the child from his/her home, away from the alleged offender.

Related to the care and treatment of the child, I believe that this rescuing, caring caseworker, in whom the child makes substantial emotional investment, should stay assigned to work closely with the child throughout the events to come. But, as I have seen it, this is seldom the procedure. Instead, the child comes to know the caseworker as just one of a string of many brief-encounter, all-too-busy people who love you and leave you . . .

The child should be required to make his/her statement once or, at most, through a series of interviews or play therapy sessions with a trained specialist, on unedited video. The child should be given the right to testify beyond this in court but should not be required or urged to do so.

But as I have seen it, all this is not the procedure followed . . .

Caution should be exercised in interview techniques to avoid contributing to the narrative of the alleged offense. Contrary to intent, stories can be put together in the minds of children from the leading questions of people trying to draw out the truth . . .

In any event, the victim should not be further traumatized by being readied for court appearance again and again, suffering prolonged and pointless anxiety, reliving the event, dwelling on vengeance, often agonizing with the ambivalence of testifying against a family member . . .

TREATMENT OF VICTIMS

We can all identify with the Charles-Bronson-movie or "Death-Wish" approach—where something unspeakably bad happens and total concern for the rest of the story is the quest for revenge. But letting this dominate the treatment of sexual abuse victims is counter-productive, to my way of thinking. It tends to prompt ***victim identities,*** cycling a central theme which may, in turn, prompt additional incidents.

The major orientation from a counseling point of view should not be to seek out and punish the guilty. It should be to promote understanding to help victims of abuse to cope with the consequences of what has already happened and to help them head off traumatic incidents in the future.

A good treatment program should include catharsis, acceptance, rational reality testing, resolution of guilt, valid conceptualizations held by caretakers, family understanding and support, control of environment, and, (restricting it to a chapter and not another book), an emphasis on the look ahead.

Catharsis

The victim needs continuing opportunities to say whatever is felt, in a regularly accessible, confidential, non-threatening setting, with a trusted, caring, competent counselor.

Acceptance

The victim must discover and/or be reassured that he/she is a worthwhile person, no matter what happened, and that many others actively care about him/her and will continue to love, even in the event of apparent betrayal or misrepresentation, with or without bizarre sexual history . . .

Rational Reality Testing

The victim must receive valid information and realistic feedback.

A vast area of defining needs and the nature of the world in general is involved here, varying with the makeup of the victim and the circumstances of the case. Among these, saliently, the child should be permitted to know that to feel bodily pleasure is all right, that sex is a natural function, that the future holds happy times, that sex will be good at the right times, with the right people, later on in life.

The child should thoroughly understand that in the process, he/she is not being rescued from sex, but rather from the ***abuse*** of sex . . .

Resolution of Guilt

The victim's feelings of abuse-associated guilt, conscious and/or repressed, must be resolved.

These should not be expected to be brushed aside with the typical declaration, "No matter what happened, it is not your fault." Expressions of the feelings should be heard out. While it may well be recognized that blame under the law falls solely on the elder, the child should not be denied the right to sense and exercise a measure of responsibility within the limits of his/her control.

Kids should be made aware of dangers. They should be taught behaviors which decrease vulnerability. They should not be given to understand that whatever they do sexually, it is always somebody else's fault. While they may be helpless in some situations, they may have free choice in others.

Children need to be helped to find constructive understandings rather than simply blaming.

This does not take blame from the offender. It merely calls for intelligent survival action in an imperfect and sometimes hazardous world.

Valid, Functional Conceptualizations

The caretakers must have relatively valid, functional conceptualizations of what has happened and what is happening.

Dissociation, for example, can be a predicted defense during intolerable events. Kids commonly go off somewhere else inside their heads during the incidence of abuse.

But further, in gaining a realistic and functional understanding of sexual abuse, narratives from victims may be expected to be ***autistically restructured*** to shield them from pain and felt guilt, and to be consciously altered in attempts both to maintain an acceptable self-image and to please listeners—officials, counselors, caseworkers, and all those other people who visibly hold even more power over their condition than do their parents . . .

The common base of understanding in areas of sexual events that I would wish to be shared by all caretakers begins with the fact that ***sex is a natural function.*** It enables physical and emotional pleasure and satisfaction. Its misuse, however, brings quite the opposite.

Abuse of the body brings pain or unhappiness—immediate and/or future.

With sex, as with any of the natural functions, comes the possibility of having pleasurable experiences which may result in regrets (as with eating too much or the wrong kind of food). The fact that fabulous sensations may occur, even when something happens that should not happen, is not evil. It is just the way it is.

Presently, kids are brought to see that something very bad has happened, no matter whether they experienced pain or pleasure. They see that it is so bad that police are brought in, that they may be taken from their homes, and that someone may have to go to jail.

In the victims' definitions of reality, sex is viewed sometimes consistent with and sometimes in conflict with some very bad physical feelings and/or some very good physical feelings, but always influenced by the caretakers.

Those abused are told it is somebody else's fault, whether or not they participated freely or were forced. They come to know that even if they actually seek sexual events with older kids or adults, the events will be seen as totally the fault of the other people.

The extent of horror and guilt feelings repressed is left to conjecture.

Family Understanding and Support

Members of the victim's family may need many of the considerations noted in regard to the treatment of the victim.

Family support is, of course, much easier to come by when the offender is not a member of the family and household. In any case, all family members should be brought to accept and not to condemn the victim.

The event of abuse should not be seen as making the child "different." To a great extent, the reactions of family members define the extent of the trauma and sometimes cause greater harm than the acts of the abuser.

Control of Environment

To the greatest extent possible, the victim should be surrounded by a dependable, caring, accepting, listening, and totally safe community.

Considering the trauma and tendencies toward hazardous attitude formation resulting from dwelling on sexual abuse incidents, the child should be totally removed from the legal justice processes after the initial fact-finding. Once safe and no longer under threat, the victim should be considered no longer to be available on demand.

The Look Ahead

In any adequate treatment program, all the areas of basic need must be addressed, including the seventh and final, ***the look ahead.***

Especially important for the victim is to gain status and find central concerns beyond the incidents of sexual abuse, to develop valid plans, and to work toward a productive future.

Realistic expectations should be held by all concerned—the kids, the caretakers, and the taxpayers.

Removal from an incestuous home, for example, is not a happily-forever-after ending. It marks a challenging beginning—for the victim and all those who will work with him/her, often inadequately, due to overwhelming case loads . . .

The bottom line finds eventual agreement. The fact that seems so obvious that it goes unmentioned, except by one small girl who told me, is "There's no future in it." No optimistic ***look ahead*** can occur in incest and abuse.

Treatment of Juvenile Offenders

While school counselors are not likely to specialize in the treatment of ***offenders,*** they must not have their heads in the sand when it comes to this concern either. Any view of what is happening, suggests that offenders start offending early, and are likely to have been abused as children themselves.

Clearly, offenders and potential offenders are now students in the schools. Yet, I know of no attempts in schools to identify them, squarely recognize their problems, refer for treatment, and/or provide support groups. Of course, twenty years ago I did not know of any such efforts to identify and provide support for those abusing drugs either.

Now, without advocating much of anything, except that counselors have ***functional orientations*** in the common concerns of kids, what might be effective treatment for young offenders? Turning a few of them around would mean more than a few less cases of abuse down the line.

Attempting to talk away behaviors which have orgasmic reinforcers is doomed and pointless, unless the talk leads to the discovery of superior reinforcers. Approaches must answer needs, not just attempt to take away the taboo need-answering behavior.

The primary goal of treatment should be the alteration of sexual preference toward acceptable outlets which can be readily available, with the attainment of appropriate skills learned.

Beyond these guidelines, approaches should be designed differently for different offenders—ranging on a disjointed continuum from naive experimenters to knife-point rapists.

To identify and assist necessitates that assessments and evaluations be extensive and valid.

With nonviolent, non-pathological offenders, appropriate outpatient treatment might include counseling which focuses on the seven areas of basic need, sex education, recognition of the suffering caused the victim, development of an individualized understanding of the cycle of happenings leading up to and following the act of abuse, acceptance of responsibility, peer group confrontations, realistic family understanding and support, and a number of approaches now only available in specialized treatment centers, such as aversive conditioning and satiation.

For those who exhibit violence, who regress to repeat abuse, or who are seriously organically or functionally impaired, no choice exists other than institutionalization with prescribed treatment.

Being found out is significant punishment for nonviolent offenders. Probation with required treatment is a more reasonable approach than another astronomically priced incarceration.

Much of the treatment prescribed for victims may well be additionally made available for young offenders. We should not lose sight of the fact that offenders are usually victims who did not have opportunities for treatment.

This in no way excuses the offenders but contributes explanation to those interested in realistic views of what is going on.

Lastly, counselors should be able to offer reasonable confidentiality to clients in this area. Counseling should be a priesthood in this regard where people may find help without additional fear of disclosure. Abusers, especially nonviolent kids, should be able to enter treatment without fear of prosecution.

I thoroughly understand that people are not inclined to alter sexual preferences until they squarely view the consequences of not doing so. But kids are in the process of becoming, and counseling can help in this.

As suggested back in Chapter 5, the challenge is to maximize freedom by attempting to provide permissible alternatives with positive consequences and without threats.

CHAPTER **ELEVEN**

STONED, STONING, AND STONE WALLS

"He's identifying with something that's been, by the media, made so damn glamorous, you know, and so esoteric that he can't help to dig it in his own little sick way . . . " I recorded in a San Francisco store-front in the early '70s.

And from across the room, "The dope addict hits bottom. The alcoholic hits bottom. The young kid, who hasn't begun to live yet, don't know what the hell the bottom is all about. . . . Droppin' a red, or smoking some pot, or shootin' some dope . . . "

There were many teachers . . .

As the national president of the American School Counselor Association at the time we set up our first Drug Abuse Committee, both the experiences and the responsibilities were impactful.

Instant experts abounded. Sorting out the many contrasting views was difficult.

Some declared that personal use provided indispensable insight. Others declared that use, past or present, clouded the thinking necessary to find solutions.

Many shamed the evils of destructive drugs, while praising the benefits of what they called "mind-expanding" drugs. Many more rose furiously to condemn *all* drugs—with smoldering tobacco in one hand, alcohol in the other, and an array of pills in pockets and purses, for these were legal and not really drugs at all.

In 1970, I appointed Amy Hittner of San Francisco's Woodrow Wilson High School as our national committee chairperson. She gathered an exceptionally knowledgeable group of counselors from around the Bay Area to initiate recommendations on what the school counselor's role should be in all of this.

In my travels I made dozens of on-the-scene recordings, from the Haight-Ashbury to the White House Conference on Youth. Editing this down, I sent workshop copies to a hundred counselor leaders across the country, not with the purpose of prescribing role but of stimulating the development of guidelines for school counselors working with students having drug-related problems.

Through a national sample of ASCA members in 1971, we learned that, for the most part, counselors were being left to make their own decisions as to what to do whenever they discovered drug use through a counseling contact.

Drug clinics headed the list of sources of help. Also named were family doctors, telephone crisis operators, school counselors, and teachers who were especially sensitive and liked by students.

"Why refer?" About one-half the respondents checked, "Beyond my competencies." Nearly a fifth checked, "Beyond the time I have to spend," and 13% checked, "Beyond the scope of school counselor's role."

As to "what can influence kids to avoid drug problems," three responses outranked all others: "Meaningful relationship with peers," "Meaningful relationship with stable adults," and "Warm relationship with a person who cares about them personally." The next two in a long list of preventive influences: "Significant person identity in an area of constructive activity" and "Adequate set of concept and symbols with which to think."

On keeping confidences related to drug problems, 10% believed all things should be kept "in strictest confidence." But most felt the "counselor should keep confidences, but may confide in professional colleagues who may be expected to provide additional help for the counselee."

Most counselors indicated that when and if a counselee admits that he/she is pushing drugs they would explain their legal position—whatever this might be—before proceeding with the interview.

A number of questions sampled opinions on what procedures should be followed in specific instances related to different drugs. Regardless of the drug involved, the responses received provided evidence that school counselors believed their role was to focus on the purpose of the drug use and the personal concerns of the student-counselee rather than conduct rap sessions on drugs.

However, this is not to say that counselors chose to ignore the drug use.

When asked what they would do, for example, if "a counselee who is a good student (good grades, motivated, popular with peers) enters your office and you detect an odor of marijuana . . . " only 10% said, "Ignore it."

The final question, one of my own: "In your opinion, should it be a duty and/or moral responsibility of school counselors to diminish the use of harmful drugs?" While 11% answered "Yes," 79% checked, "Yes, but through helping students adequately cope with life problems and gain satisfying identity." No one checked, "No," and 9% checked, "No, but this might be a by-product of sound counseling."

Consensus seemed to exist amongst experienced counselors across the country that drug use is minimized and/or diminished through focusing on personal concerns and that the school counselor's role should change little if any from what we have long said it should be. Drug abuses only stress the increasing need for adequate counseling services in the schools—as recognized by the 1971 White House Conference on Youth, which called for one school counselor for every 50 students.

April of 1972 found me speaking at a Utah counselors convention where I discovered I was to play expert in drug abuse in an afternoon session. The first presenter, with a doctorate in drama, the state anti-drug-abuse coordinator, spoke in profound terms of home and family. With moist eyes I thought the tough-act-to-follow bit and doubted there was anything worth my saying in comparison.

Having used the seven-basic-needs fun formula to keynote that morning, I applied it to the drug scene . . .

The consequence was a stream of front-line counselors coming up afterwards with "Thanks for something concrete, something we can use in working with kids in the real world . . . Changing home and family here and now is beyond us . . . "

The message continues to be expanded and refined, but the seven points cover the field. Consideration of these basic need areas suggests how people get into the use of drugs, how they can stay out of it, and how they can break away.

ACTION

Drug use is something to do. It fills the void for some—a substitute for boredom . . . For many it is where the action is . . . Drug use is often linked to considerable enabling, preparatory, and ritualistic activity.

"To begin with, it wasn't that I had big problems. Now, yes. Then, no. But that day, it was more that I didn't have much of anything to do. I was just bored, in a dumb way, maybe, now looking back on it. There must have been other things I could've done, something else to do. Anyway, then, I was looking for I don't know what. Something to do. And then getting into something I guess I wanted and knew I didn't want. If that makes any sense?"

Like words come from people telling of a first injection of heroin in a ghetto alley and from people telling of lonely experiments with medicine-chest pills on rainy afternoons in plush homes in the suburbs. Boredom and the basic need for activity are contributing forces in a wide variety of settings.

Action is so much a part of it that asking kids what they plan to *do* over a weekend can bring the answer, simply, "Drugs. We're going to do drugs." And the answer from the older, more sophisticated can be, "Socialize . . . " with mention of "liquid refreshment," and even then, "*Do* some drugs." Or, "The magic's done with mirrors, and blades, and neat white lines . . . "

The attraction is for more than orgasmic climaxes and chemically induced sensations.

"And once you've been using," I was told by one who knew, "but say you are cured. Made up your mind. No more. Time is always heavy on you.

"You have a day when there's nothing to do, or you're lonely and there's no one there, and you have to have something. And it's not only drugs you get thinking about, not just the feeling you have after you take drugs. It's all the routine, all the things that go into it. It's finding something to rip off . . . Seeing people . . . Making the rounds to find the supply. There's lots to do to just get there, you know."

Once sampled, the drive to be doing something is often compulsively directed toward drug-oriented activity. Having nothing to do offers intolerable temptation, even when firm decisions have been made to avoid further use.

In order to stay away from drugs, before or after addictive use—whether we are talking about physical or psychological addiction—it is imperative to stay busy, to be occupied with other things.

"But there's nothing to do in this town, you know."

"Come on . . . "

DISCOVERY

Drug use provides learning and discovery experiences—in finding out the feelings resulting from ingestion, in supposed self-discovery with use of "mind-expanding" drugs, and in the social and sexual experiences of the scene.

"I didn't want to get into anything heavy. I just wanted to see what it was like. I kept hearing how great stuff was . . ."

Much of what will be for each individual depends on the pre-use learning initially provided by peers, the media, and respected elders. Then for those who sample and follow along, there come the reality-testing discoveries, the happenings with both the chemicals and the people on the scene, the firsthand encounters with the beautiful and the ugly and with the chemically distorted blend of the two.

Different drugs do different things. Some excite. Some calm and provide feelings of well-being. Some cause hallucinations. Much is to be learned.

Drugs that put aside conscious controls and delve into the repressions of the unconscious provide potential for discovery. And some people are into drugs for this reason, so they say. But listening to them, I get images of children pulling apart an atomic pile just to see what is inside.

Drugs are different things to different people.

"We don't go for that mind-expanding stuff," I remember being told by heroin addicts in the Fillmore. "We see different things. Like they tell you about all those beautiful colors and flowers and love-everybody feelings. But we see our daddy kicking our mama in the stomach . . . Toilets that don't work . . . Rats on the bed . . . Different things, you know."

In quite another group, "We know what each of the drugs will do," one boy in San Mateo insisted. "We know all about them. When someone uses a drug, he knows what he is doing and what will happen."

"Off the street?" a girl in the group challenged. "Come on. Seven buys of mescaline last week. Peyote was supposed to be the big thing. Different kids made buys in different places. And nobody had mescaline. They checked it out. They have this service where you can take drugs and have them tell you what it is," she clarified for me. "And there was a wild bunch of stuff. But nobody had mescaline. They didn't know what they were taking."

It comes to mind that the great Freud once researched and personally experienced a new wonder drug called *cocaine*. Initial findings caused him to recommend it to his friends and his family which in later years, led him to (using his words) "grave reproaches."

Discoveries in the drug world can lead to regret. Yet, the need to "find out what it's like," to learn and discover, contributes to the scene.

EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Drugs offer fabulous feelings. They are ingested in the quest to feel better and gain a high . . . Some users see drugs as "frosting on the cake" to make excitement and good times even better . . . Some see drug dependency as a love affair complete with orgasmic experience far superior to the sexual variety . . . For some, the risk-taking does not deter but enhances the excitement of it all . . .

If one flaw stands out above all others in our cultural structure, one thing that will cause people to use and abuse drugs more than any other, it is the lack of built-in provision for adequate, need-fulfilling emotional experience as a regular part of every individual's life.

Civilization has brought us wonderful things, among these an appreciation for peace and an obvious need for zero-population-increase-stabilization. But it has not turned off our basic drives for excitement, for fight-flight and procreative activities. And we would not want these turned off. One way or another, we all enjoy emotional expression and the related sensations.

Yet, the fact is, expression of emotionality in many instances is blocked, expressly forbidden, and labeled taboo.

"No laughing, no crying, no fighting, and no fooling around," I once heard a teacher shout at her students. And said differently, by a friend who tells me he gives his students the solution to the AIDS threat every day: "Sit down and shut your mouth!"

A shortage of outlets exists that are safe, socially acceptable, and adequately rewarding.

For a substantial number of people, drug use has arrived as an acceptable substitute for emotional expression. Although the *words* of established authority say, "No," parental and peer *models* too often say the opposite. And the media continually links drug use with excitement and fun.

The risks and consequences of drug use seem minimal as compared to the risks and consequences of attempting to work out life-styles of adequate emotional expression any other way. No mountains, stadiums, or battlefields are needed. No requirement for a member of the opposite sex, who may shame you if you go too far or not far enough, or who may break your heart and leave you for another. And, assuming a ban on social needles, no risk of AIDS. Just illusions of ecstasy, without the awesome risks of entering the real game of life.

An image from the past comes to mind of a woman in a mental institution, rocking back and forth, with a doll in her arms that she thought was real. I would not have taken away her doll. I could not give her back her true child who had died years before.

But for the young, there is greater hope. There is the real world and the opportunities for genuine fulfilling experiences.

"If you use your own chemical factory, you can experience thrills beyond comprehension," activist therapist Leroy Looper told us. "Like a great love affair, with somebody you really want to be with. You come to a climax that has never been reached before. There is no pill at the drugstore that can touch that. Or meeting a loved one after many years, and you find yourself crying out of joy . . . "

BELONGING

Drugs are ingested by some because it seems "everyone is doing it," and it is a requirement of the crowd, in order to belong . . . They are used by others in somewhat different circumstances to cope with loneliness and the lack of belonging, to counter the depressions of rejection.

"I know I said I wasn't going to use pot anymore," a fifteen-year-old girl told me. "I don't even like to smoke, but they're my friends. They all use. And the truth is, my best friend's grandfather makes his living selling. Nothing big. But it's always there. And if I wasn't using, they wouldn't want me around. . . . My mother is always telling me not to use, but if I didn't, there would be trouble between the families. Really! . . . "

"It's hard, in some groups," said a college student close to me. "It isn't that they just don't accept you. They reject you. They think you are a *narc*. They suspect you of being out to get them. . . . The only sensible thing is to find friends that want to go the way you do. It's unbelievable how many dumb mice out there follow along, being drawn into things they don't want, just because they can't find ways to turn stuff down . . . "

"Don, you aren't going to like this," said an officer of Alameda's sheriff's department. We had been riding around Berkeley searching for answers. "But the only thing I have ever seen work in helping an addict turn away from drugs is to get him to inform. Once his buddies reject him, he's got a chance, but as long as the old crowd is there, he'll be drawn back into it. Unless he finds new friends, some drug-free crowd to belong to, there's no end to it . . . "

In their need to belong, people are guided to or away from drugs by other people—groups and individuals.

Also, some are drawn to use drugs as ***substitutes*** for belonging and for the lack of satisfying relationships with groups and caring individuals.

"Drugs open you up . . . without having to open up with another person," said a boy I knew once. "I mean, wow, you open up with somebody, some person, some girl, and she can cut you. Hurt you deep . . . With people, maybe some you can trust, maybe some. Maybe there is even a girl somewhere. Maybe. But no wonder it comes out that so many boys get this loud, obnoxious front that girls say they don't like. Part of the reason is so guys don't get hurt . . .

"Drugs or girls, a risk either way . . . "

The need to belong has many facets in prompting drug use . . .

VOICE

Young people tend to see drug use as an assertion of independence and a symbol of rebellion against authority. Some use drugs to exercise voice in their own affairs. Some, to defy parents, school, and the established community.

"So my mother has this new boyfriend living with us. I don't like him, and he don't like me, or maybe it is that he likes me too much. But anyway, she's always preaching at me, and all the time she's doing things I'd never think of doing. And we start fighting, and I take off, or later slip out my bedroom window. And get high. I just get high. There's always stuff around, with some of my friends she says I can't see, but I do. She drinks all the time. But she thinks it's just dreadful if I do anything. And it really grabs her when she thinks I'm out stoned someplace . . . But I'm OK. I can take care of myself . . . "

With variations, drug use is another thing kids can do that authority is telling them hypocritically they should not do, and this automatically makes it something that some kids seem compelled to do.

We all know young people who are consumed by their need to strike out at authority—often understandably so. Their total life-styles seem built around the need.

We see them in elementary school flashing cigarettes in forbidden places. It is no surprise to see them with pills and sloppier smokes in their socks at high school.

"Nobody's going to push me around, to tell me what to do," they declare, and drug use comes naturally.

In turn, the consequences come naturally as well. As with any and all who rebel unintelligently, they have less and less genuine voice in what they do. Drugs are found to be controlling to the extent that their lives are dominated by the need to use and maintain supply.

BEING SOMEBODY

Many see their drug experience as self-elevating. They see themselves as significant somebodies because of their association with the drug scene. Both because of the drug-induced feelings and because of the esoteric creations of the media and other profiting enterprises, many see drug use as necessary to really be somebody.

Doyle didn't have it to compete in sports or to make grades that were more than barely passing. He was rejected by most of those with whom he tried to be friends. Halfway through high school, he moved to drugs. To meet expenses, he became a supplier, and finally, he had people who thought he was somebody.

When I last heard of Doyle, he was about twenty and had been busted for possession at a rock concert. A boy who saw him after this arrest told me, "He was talking it up like he had won some kind of prize. And he was asking people if they had read about him in the papers the last time, when he had a jury trial."

Some, like Doyle, feel they have become important and noteworthy to others on the scene. Others search inwardly for identity, worth, and self-related beauty.

I recall a girl who listened patiently to a number in a circle try to top each other in telling of peak experiences in self-discovery through drugs. Finally, she broke in with, "Lots of kids who don't use drugs have worked it out without drugs. They have already found acceptable identity. To them, all this stuff about trying to find yourself through drugs is so much crap . . . I want to be me, not some cloud-wandering junky."

Another time, another place, I remember talking with a young man in the Haight-Ashbury who had recently returned from following a mystic. He was asked if he thought drugs were necessary to sensitivity and expansion of consciousness.

"Naw. No, I don't," he answered. "I think that for certain people, like myself, who have been brought up without true values . . . Like I feel I have been more or less taught false values. And I had to use drugs to learn certain consciousness that does exist and always has existed and, I believe, always will exist.

"On my trip I met several young people who have never taken any psychedelic drugs at all, who have somehow grown up with these values. And I could learn from these people although they had never turned on with drugs." Then contradicting his initial answer, he said, "But I think drugs are necessary. I think they were just a miracle that came down to help some of us turn on who really needed to turn on . . . "

In contrast, "You take a white kid, coming out of a middle-class bag," I recorded elsewhere in San Francisco the same day. "And he doesn't particularly like the value system of his time. And he wants to experience something real quick.

Instead of being eighteen, he wants to be ninety-nine and get it all at once. You know what I mean? So he goes on one of these quick trips that freaks him out, so he's really ninety-nine, you understand? So he's like a vegetable 'cause he got a bum trip . . . ' "

"*ESOTERIC*," I sometimes print on the blackboard. "Did I spell that correctly? Anybody like to tell us what the word means? Anybody? It's a good word to know, to have in your vocabulary . . . Very big on the drug scene . . . ***Esoteric*** is that which is reserved for the initiated few.

"On the scene, 'Hey, man, I know all this neat, far-out stuff. And you don't know nothin'. I am in. And you are definitely *out*.'"

In kaleidoscopic ways, the need to be somebody draws many into drug use—as a means of imagined prestige, as a supposed tool for psychic discovery, and as an escape from the intolerable feelings of nothingness.

THE LOOK AHEAD

Drug use offers temporary escape from the depression of a dismal, threatening, empty look ahead—a look ahead to First Period, tonight, tomorrow, or ten years down the line. For many, alcohol and other drugs provide something to look forward to, something wonderful within reach, an invitation to party and feel better, no matter how poor the grades, how rotten things may be at home, or how dark and pointless the future.

The very best of what counselors do is in the area of helping kids grasp a rational, productive ***look ahead.*** Coming to an understanding of the escape offered through drugs is part of the process.

AIDS, war, the bomb, ghettos, energy shortages, pollution, overpopulation, fanatics, deadweight free-loaders, and the lack of trust in leadership—these and more contribute to a futile, hopeless outlook. It follows that some will argue for fun without a future, pleasure *now*, without the bother or obligations of working for it.

Undeniably, drugs can provide pleasurable sensations, now. Right *now!* Drugs are used by medical doctors as relievers of pain and are advertised on TV as ingredients of good times all around. But complications arise in their use, hard facts of life that all of us must face whether we think of ourselves as a part of the total drug scene or not.

On top of the list, *drugs are deceptive.* They may relieve the pain and change feelings. But relief is at best temporary. The real world remains, along with its problems and imperfections.

Further, *physical and mental damage result from the abuse of drugs.* Negative effects on future generations are possible. Ensnaring dependencies and addictions occur—both of the physical and psychological varieties. And where needles and multi-partner sex may be involved, AIDS is also on the scene.

Still further, *sale and possession of some drugs are against the law.* "You might talk big about how pot ought to be legalized. But when you have that hand put on your shoulder, you are in trouble." Arrests, harassment, confinement in prison, and dangerous association with the underworld—all can become part of the scene with illegal drugs.

Most important is the question, *"Who's tending the store?"*

"While everybody is freaked out, high, escaped to happier lands, who is tending the store? Who's making the bread? Who is doing all those things we must have done in order to live? Who is doing all those things we must have done very, very well to sustain our high standard of living?"

The drug subculture, valued or despised, enriching or degrading, exists as a parasite on the straight culture. It is provided for, protected, nurtured, and maintained by the straight culture.

We now have a seemingly contradictory situation in this technologically efficient country where survival and a significant measure of freedom are possible without making a corresponding contribution to productivity—at least for a number of individuals. But there is a limit, seriously undefined and ignored, to the staying power of the straight, productive citizens who carry the weight of survival in the world.

In the midst of it all, far too many have come to believe that loudly condemning the establishment and escaping from reality through drugs can somehow make things better.

This is a sickness. But rationalized by leaders of the scene, popularized by the media, exploited by profiteers, and ineffectually answered by our lagging institutions, it is a powerful national force. It makes it difficult for kids to turn on to objectivity. It clouds the look ahead.

We cannot afford to let greater and greater segments of our population escape to infantile dependency. It is national suicide. It is the loss of great power and potential in providing the best that humans can offer other humans in this world.

CHAPTER **TWELVE**

ON THE SCENE, PREVENTION

"We're losing him. His pulse is dropping down to nothing," the nurse shouted from the cot room.

I was on the phone with George's mother who was less than a mile away but with no car. Flashing lights came by from the opposite direction as I raced to get the mother. It was hard to tell the entrance of the rickety corner house. I knocked on three doors and a boarded window. I was double checking the address when she scurried to my car. Ignoring speed limits, we were back at the school in time for her to follow the stretcher up, into the ambulance, and away . . .

The very next morning George, the same 15-year-old, was back in school, smiling, bleary eyed, and with the odor of the same paint fumes he had promised, over and over, never to sniff again . . . And five months later, just returned from treatment, with the familiar winning grin, he was telling me he was clean, but again smelling of the fumes . . .

Clearly, counselors cannot provide the sort of wrap-around answering of needs necessary to cope with the disease of chemical dependency.

Today many programs are available with competent specialists, and appropriately awesome price tags, where drug use is the primary concern. And part of what counselors do is to break through the rationalizations and denial of kids and their parents enough to get those abusing off to the residential treatment programs with detoxification facilities.

Obviously, without detox' we can find ourselves talking to chemicals more than to the kids underneath.

This is not to say, however, that school counselors cannot provide significant help, indispensable help which might not be there otherwise—help in breaking away, in staying away, and in avoiding getting started in the first place.

But caution is advised in regard to emphasis and perspective. We risk being caught up in the overwhelming scene and becoming so drug-oriented that we neglect what we are about.

On my wall I have a reminding statement, which takes a measure of incubation: "If you see drug abuse as a *cause* instead of a *symptom*, then you must attack *drug use*—which eventually brings you to the need to see drug abuse as a symptom so you can get at the real problems."

That is to say, in declaring drug abuse or alcoholism to be a disease, it doesn't really go anywhere to suppose that use and abuse account for the total, or even central problem. Effective help reaches into questions of the cause of use, whether long-term or initial.

A high school boy—with a bad case of acne—comes to mind, referred to a counselor with a hastily scrawled note, "Is this kid stoned?"

The boy collided with the desk sitting down. His balance and manner prompted the question before the counselor had read the note.

He closed the door when the boy started to cry.

"I can't handle this," said the boy. "I try. I'm really trying . . . I would if I could see how."

"Do you want to tell me more about it?"

"I got her pregnant. But don't get me wrong. We don't fool around, with other kids. I mean just us, forever. But that isn't going to be long," he laughed through his tears. "Her father is going to kill me."

"He knows?"

"Yeah."

"She told him?"

"I did. Last night."

"And," said the counselor, unable to suppress the inner picture of his own supposed reaction, had this kid told him his daughter was pregnant.

"And he came at me. Cathy and her mother kind of jumped him, holding him back. And they were screaming for me to get out, which I did. I was in my car, pulling out when he was down the walk and into his and after me. Two blocks from there, he cut in front of me, and I went up the curb to keep from hitting him. Man, I don't know how he moved so fast, but he had me out and on the grass, by the neck," he said, pulling his collar aside to show purple bruises. "I thought I was gone. Really.

"Then . . . I was looking at his face. He just changed. He squinted up from me and started to cry. He let go. Didn't say anything. Just went off to his car." The boy pulled Kleenex and blew.

"Where does it go from here?" asked the counselor.

"I get thrown out of school," said the boy. "Then, I don't know . . . Get high with my friends."

"That's what you want?"

"No."

"What do you want to happen?"

"Get married. Get a job. Get a GED . . . I'm no junkie . . . All this is too heavy. And my friends . . . They aren't really friends, actually . . . "

The next day, the boy went back to see the father. The counselor offered to arrange the meeting and be with him. The boy stayed clean and did it on his own. This time, the meeting concluded with the father loaning him a jacket and the four of them going out to dinner to celebrate marriage plans . . .

Drug use, though established to be very real, is not always the central problem.

HELPING ON THE SCENE

Intervention and formal treatment or not, broad, inclusive concerns must be addressed by counselors who work with kids using alcohol and other drugs. What is the purpose of this behavior? What is happening which prompts this behavior? Is the individual satisfied with his situation? What can be done to enable the individual to cope more constructively?

Based on behaviors, on what is said, on what is not said (at least not truthfully), and on the observations and evaluations of others, determine *what is happening.*

Apply the counseling imperatives—listen, accept, and define rational reality, and more.

Give thought to the seven basic need areas, and when and if considering referral, recognize that any adequate treatment program provides for answering needs in each and every one of these.

Understand that *whenever a need-fulfilling activity is blocked or taken away, two consequences are certain and inevitable: the individual will experience frustration, and something else will come in to take the place of the lost activity.*

Before any effort is made to take away an individual's drug use, thought should be given to the nature of the expected frustration and how to deal with it.

Denial, with substantial shades of fight and flight, for example, is the predicted initial response from both kids and their parents. And down the line, emotional episodes may be expected in response to the deprivations and alterations in each of the seven basic need areas.

To simply stop using does not make everything OK. It may in fact prompt a new set of problems to surface.

Use serves a purpose. It has a function.

"Why talk about my problems," said one thirteen-year-old, "when I can get high and not have them?"

Talk, and the thought that goes with it, should lead to solutions and better ways of coping with problems.

The goal in treatment and in support groups must be to go on to better things. Thought should be given to what will take the place of drug use in each of the basic need areas. Just trying to take drugs away is pointless in the long run. It cannot work by itself.

A recovering addict once telling me the horrors of his past use, hanging out of cars at a hundred miles an hour and the like, said abruptly, "If you don't think I would like to go get high this very minute, you don't understand the situation. It's fun."

Whether we are talking drugs, sex, or ice cream, people resist change.

At a local public meeting headed *Chemical People* after Nancy Reagan via satellite TV and dozens of people rising to tell tragic tales, a seventeen-year-old spoke from the center of the hall, "I've been intervened and intervened and intervened some more. I've just had it." Laughter sounded from a following.

"I've been in drug treatment twice. . . . I know a whole bunch about drug abuse. And the only way to get a kid to stop using is when he wants to. If they don't want to, they ain't going to. It don't matter what you do or where you put them."

"What's your point?" asked an impatient moderator.

"I like getting high." More laughter. "Seriously, I have a good time when I go out to party.

"I'm in a lot of legal trouble right now because I like to party. And they want to lock me up, for a long time because of it. I'm not hurting anybody but myself. I know people who have gone out and knifed people, robbed people, and they are out walking the streets. I'm not a violent person. I just like to party . . . "

Again, as with drugs, sex, or ice cream, where people experience their moments of pleasure, they will return, both in fantasy and in reality.

Some years ago, before the time of AIDS, a school counselor in Denver told me of a girl who was hiding her arm as she talked with him. Gaining rapport, he asked to see the arm, then declared, "Hey, this is no counseling confidence. We have to have a doctor look at the arm."

The doctor reported that infection had set in and that she would have lost the arm if she had waited any longer . . .

The counselor spoke of a close counseling relationship that followed, with changes for the better in her personal life . . .

Months later, feeling rightfully pleased with all he had seen happen, he found himself asking at the close of an interview, "Have you learned anything from all of this?" And when she answered with "You bet," he asked her, "What? On top of the list, more than anything else, what have you learned?"

"Always be number one on the needle." . . .

In any event, we must know our limitations, not to cause us to give up but instead to provide enough realistic perspective to keep us going.

So sometimes we have to settle for getting them to use a clean needle, a practice of increased significance in this age of AIDS.

Or do we?

Again, we strive toward answers to the questions of what *helps* and where to put the emphasis in the limited time available.

"If you want to hear about drugs," said a former addict, talking with me and kids in Hartford, "go down to the police station. They have those little suitcases that they open up and show you what the drugs are like. But if you want to talk about why you act the way you do and why you feel the need to get high and get away from yourself, that's what I want to talk about."

Dwelling on drug nomenclature and the esoteric subculture experiences can be a gross waste.

What is needed here is to foster the good life and help people find good feelings without the ingestion of drugs.

Once the users start to move from a fun orientation or full-life orientation to a chemical-use or drug-experience orientation, they may be considered to have the disease, the chemical dependency. They may then be expected to act in contradiction with their values, to rationalize in defense of faulty behavior, and to project repressed unacceptable self-images on to others, even on to people who are trying to help. They may then need medical as well as psychological assistance.

What is ***drug abuse?*** By my definition, it is the ingestion of drugs in order to get a happy high that could be reached in other ways, or in order to escape problems that should be faced and worked through.

The most significant questions on the human scene do not deal with the effects of the various drugs, enlightening or demolishing, or with the latest contrived jargon of the halls and streets.

Instead, the basic relevant questions for the kids must be, *"Will I come to depend on drugs and drug-oriented activities for my highs, for my fun in life? Or can I develop productive, caring relationships and work out a life-style based on genuine, contributing experiences in the world of reality?"*

PREVENTION

My assertion is that, limited though we may be, counselors and their co-workers in the schools can be and *are* more effective in ***prevention*** than any program can ever be in punishment, treatment, and rehabilitation.

In reaching for a common base of understanding with my colleagues, I suggest that the goal of prevention is simply *to lead students to avoid the use of illegal drugs, including the use of alcohol during their teens,* and then go on to note that the initial and continuing use of drugs among young people is linked to the seven areas of basic need.

Briefly stated, in any concerted prevention effort in the schools—

1. Provide and stimulate ample ***action***—mental and physical. . . . Do not tolerate inactivity when students are expected to be active. . . . Keep drug use and anticipation of drug use out of the activity.

2. See that accurate drug information and realistic life orientations are provided all students. Emphasis should be given to helping them ***discover*** highs which are not prompted by drugs or drug-scene activities. . . . Lead students to discover that when

they do not want to do what the crowd seems bent on doing, others are likely to feel the same way, ready to follow those courageous enough to speak out. . . . Beyond class and group work, make available one-to-one opportunities to think things through, with people to whom students can talk with confidence and in confidential settings. . . . Provide adequate positive role models . . .

3. Give attention to making the classes and the activities of the school exciting—not necessarily in the boisterous sense. . . . Examine the deeper nature of laughter, utilize humor, and recognize the importance of "turning on." Let it be within the realm of acceptability to teach that to care, to love, and to feel angry, sad, or fearful is all right. Equally important, teach both rational restrictions on and rewarding expressions of these feelings. . . . Recognizing the tremendous impact of ***emotional experiences,*** do not suppose that students who are experimenting with drugs will be turned away from them simply by being told they are dangerous, shameful, or unlawful. Help students discover their own personal, internal "chemical factories." Help them gain commitment to finding highs through helping relationships, self-sufficiency, and real-life accomplishments.
4. While rejecting destructive ***behaviors,*** give emphasis to the acceptance of *individuals* and to making them feel that they belong. . . . Help students discover what is needed to gain lasting, rewarding friendships. . . . Help each find the feeling of ***belonging*** that goes with being a contributing, responsible member of society. . . . Guide new and unattached students to accepting, need-fulfilling groups. . . . Bring all students to see their stake in extending the hand of friendship rather than shutting classmates out. . . . Provide emotional support to students who are attempting to break away from drug-oriented groups. . . . Provide practice in role-playing on how to say, "No," and in sorting through the question of where they truly want to belong.

5. Provide opportunities for students to have their say and make choices whenever this is feasible. . . . Help them understand how they gain significant voice and freedom through acting responsibly. . . . Help them learn productive decision-making skills. . . . Help them learn social skills with which to assert their own positive views and influence others. . . . Bring them to understand how, through their present behaviors, they have a great deal of voice in deciding their near and distant destinies. . . . Confront the dissociation of loudly rejecting the older generation's imperfections while blindly following their more ineffectual, destructive examples.

   Place honest images before young rebels—the man frantically patting pockets in search of cigarettes, the dilapidated housewife taking pills, and the alcoholic taking a bar break to get through the afternoon.

   In contrast, rock amp's and the advertising media suggest quite different views and teach from TV to T-shirts that drug use is "doing your own thing."

   Kids sometimes need help in seeing things as they really are. They need counselors who are not running scared, afraid of being accused of teaching values, counselors who in their relationships with kids share their thinking, counselors who care enough to also exercise ***voice.***

6. Reward and give recognition. Help each and every student to be ***somebody*** of recognized worth in positive, realistic terms. . . . Avoid comments which glamorize and glorify drug use. Define as childish rather than as super-adult in character. . . . Foster the pride that goes with influencing peers to avoid destructive behaviors. . . . Deal squarely with put-downs, and maintain a clear understanding within the group that name-callers need help in avoiding their projection of themselves onto others. . . .

Refuse to let students fail in school—not by lowering standards but by acting to require and enable learning that can be accomplished. . . . Help them recognize that the honor and distinction of ***trust*** is not a right, and not something owed because of love, but something to be earned.

7. Help students gain more optimistic views of the ***look ahead,*** based on the real-world opportunities available and their potential to earn their own way. . . . Strive to get them to find things to look forward to—daily, yearly, and lifelong. . . . Help them develop realistic educational plans so that both their work today and their views of distant tomorrows can be meaningful, so that they are less inclined to let themselves get wasted for a few shortsighted kicks. . . . Foster commitment to productive life-styles and caring relationships without dependencies on drugs for highs. . . . Provide adequate concepts and symbols with which to think and understand basic human behaviors. . . . Provide practiced skills with which to cope with moments of decision . . .

Wrapping up a series of weekly communications termed "CB's" (for ***common base*** of understanding), I wrote—

"While schools cannot provide the around-the-clock environment necessary to insure absolute success in prevention, we can surely improve the odds by giving attention to each of the areas touched on in the past seven CB's:

1. Action,
2. Discovery,
3. Emotional Experience,
4. Belonging,
5. Voice,
6. Being Somebody, and
7. The Look Ahead.

"It takes all seven. Don't be misled by cheap substitutes. It takes all seven to do the job.

"Of course, these are areas of need in all of us. These are areas in which we require need-fulfillment whether we are involved in drug use or not. When we lack fulfillment, drug use is just one of the ways we may reach out—sometimes with regrettable consequences.

"When I started distributing these paper-glider-construction materials some weeks ago, the purpose was to offer suggestions with the goal of prevention of drug use among our students.

"What we have here are valid suggestions in that respect, indeed. But we have more.

"Answering the needs of students in the seven areas provides a program beyond prevention of drug use. It provides a program of prevention of mental illness, prevention of discipline problems in the classroom, and prevention of burnout . . .

"This makes it no less a drug prevention program, but more so . . .

"I remember sitting in past-midnight conversation with Amy Hittner (ASCA's National Drug Abuse Committee Chairperson) and Carter Mehl (then at the Haight-Ashbury Clinic) after one of our meetings in San Francisco when we were struggling with what the school counselors' role should be in all of this. Amy had declared, 'I can't do everything.' Carter followed with (from a tape used in a workshop some of you have attended), ' . . . it's important for school counselors not to be caught in the trap of supposing it's their job to develop a community drug program. Bullshit! They got enough trouble if they can just deal with the problems of individual kids who are having problems. That's all you can expect of them.'

"Teachers surely have enough to do in their primary responsibility as well.

"As Ev Jones stressed at a faculty meeting as we started these CB's, when you do your usual fine job as teacher, administrator, school nurse, speech therapist, psychologist, counselor, or whatever in the schools, you don't have to be a goat for anyone. When you keep the seven areas of need actively in mind, you are making a significant contribution, indeed.

"If somebody wants numbers, every one of those bright-eyed kids at work in classes day after day is a success story, and considering the forces at work on many of our students, most of those we go to sleep thinking of as failures may rationally be seen as success stories, also, if we give thought to what would be if we were not there doing what we can.

"One needs to look very carefully at taking time from the preventive work, where we are spread dangerously thin as it is, to be a special friend of the chemically dependent.

"At the same time, it is important not to polarize and condemn each other over the issues of the all-consuming attempts to help those who compound their problems through drug use. Inevitably, we all have our turns at dealing with the downstream problems when suddenly they are our students and our family . . .

"Keep the seven areas of need in mind. They suggest how people get into alcohol and drug use, how they can stay out of it, and how they can break away.

"There is more to it, of course.

"Our conclusions here are not endings but beginnings.

"Thanks for being there . . . "

CHAPTER **THIRTEEN**

CAREERS AHEAD

"*Just Say, 'Yes!'* " shouts a poster on my wall, "to all the good things in your future—through the planning, the commitment, and the hard work that will make them happen."

The well-intentioned just-say-no advocates fall short, bless them. Saying, "No," is incidental to finding opportunities for which the answer can be a committed, enthusiastic "Yes."

Saying, "No," is a temporary and inadequate happening unless it is a part of a continuing life-style involving a satisfactory number of fulfilling options to say, "Yes."

At the close of any group sessions involving drug abuse, I leave with an emphasis on the ***look ahead.*** I note the coming activities related to career and educational planning and the decisions they will soon be making regarding their future.

RESISTANCE TO PLANNING

"Among other things," I tell them, "setting goals and planning is *growing up* and taking responsibility for your lives . . . " But many messages other than mine are shaping their lives.

"When I asked the girl whether she used contraceptives," a psychiatrist once shared with me, "she replied, 'Oh, Doctor, these things aren't planned. They just happen.'

"Then later, in a separate interview, her mother said, 'But I told her, wanting her to stay out of trouble with sex and all the violence you hear about going on. These things aren't planned. They just happen.' "

The just-happens attitude is a common cop-out amongst the kids, often stemming from their parents, in educational-career planning as well in the arenas of sex and violence.

"Mom says she's not old enough to have a kid thinking about going to college," one girl told me. "She says we have enough money problems to think about right now without that."

The need continues for one-to-one contact with ample time to define rational realities with individual kids.

"Why should I have to do this stuff?" a boy I didn't yet know asserted. He had the smell of burned hemp about him. "I don't care what happens to me."

"Classes going pretty good," I said.

"No," he contradicted. "Two—they aren't even required—you got to get me out of."

"But you don't care, you said."

"I care enough to want to get a study hall."

"How did you get into these classes?"

"I don't know."

"Well, maybe you will get out. Maybe not. We'll talk about that later. Right now," I pushed at the worksheet in front of us, "lets get with this stuff a few minutes and see if we can head off you getting into classes you don't want next semester.

"What do think you want to be doing ten years from now?" . . .

We found a few things he did care about, and things to talk about . . .

Eventually, I got to, "What do you do for a good time . . . ?"

He cocked an eye and said, "You don't want to know." But still he told me, then talked on, recognizing that some things in his life were not paying off.

"You want something better," I reflected. "So, right now, with all these years ahead of you, I ask, 'What's fun?' "

"What can make things happier for you in your life? What can make school more fun, more meaningful in helping prepare you for a career? And what careers might be right for you in your future? . . . "

In overcoming resistances and evasions, recognizing that ours is a fun-oriented society can help at all levels . . .

IT OUGHT TO BE FUN

"Jobs fun?" some kids wrinkle their noses. "Jobs are work. Just what you have to do to get the bucks so you can have fun somewhere else. To get the car or pay for the music or buy the clothes or whatever . . . "

"For lots of people," I admit, "jobs aren't much fun, for a variety of reasons. But in your life, wouldn't it be great if you could do what it takes and find a job, a career, you could call fun?"

"The job I have now," said a high school junior, "is fun. We work hard, take a lot of static from customers, but pitch in together, and it's fun. More than school. More than at home. But I wouldn't want to make a career of it."

No matter what, when exploring careers, it makes sense to keep the seven areas of basic need in mind.

Whether students seem totally without goals or already committed to a specific field, careers should be explored repeatedly throughout the high-school years, and before. And looking beyond the usual questions of salary and necessary training, a check sheet might include the following:

"1. To what extent does the career involve ***action***—physical and mental? Do-nothing jobs, regardless of the pay or lack of it, are counter-productive for the individual and for society. . . .

"2. Does the career offer opportunities for and/or require continued ***learning?*** Or same old stuff forever? . . .

"3. What about the ***emotional*** aspects? Will the job provide the degree of excitement you think you would like? Is it stressful? Are outlets built-in for coping with stress? . . .

"4. Do those in this line of work have a feeling of ***belongingness?*** Does an all-for-one-and-one-for-all spirit exist? Do you think you will fit in? . . .

"5. Will this career give you the opportunities you want to ***voice*** your own point of view? Will you be required to make many decisions or, for the most part, be told what to do every step of the way? . . .

"6. Do you think people in this career are important ***somebodies?*** By what standards? How does the function they perform contribute to society? . . .

"7. What about the ***look ahead?*** Does the job have a future in it, with opportunities for advancement, or is it simply a dead-end job? Beyond personal gain, does the work make for a better world and contribute to the future well-being of the young? . . .

"Reviewing responses on this worksheet, especially when thinking of signing up for next semester's courses and making educational plans, note that career explorations seldom come though as super 24-hour-a-day fun packages. Even with a great career, one that is satisfying in most of the seven areas, leisure time activity will be important as a supplement and change of pace.

"The same seven basic areas can serve as a guide for choosing leisure activities which can compliment your career in rounding out a full life.

"Education should provide preparation both for careers and for more fulfilling use of leisure. . . . "

BEING SOMEBODY—REALLY

"Hey, I'm not just shooting for a career to have fun," comes a natural reaction. "I want to be somebody."

At which point I take them back to the seven points, saying, "No contradiction. The word fun is being used very broadly here. Perhaps we should substitute the words ***full life*** or ***success*** instead of ***fun*** when we refer to this collection of seven areas of basic need.

"But in our considerations today, lets think about what sort of a somebody you want to be a few years down the line and try to figure out what it takes to get there . . . "

As said, then and again, "If you don't know where you're going, you are liable to end up where you don't want to be." And, "People who know they are headed for a worthwhile career aren't likely to get off the track."

Of course, dominating self-images are not always tied to career goals. People can be somebodies to themselves and to others in a wide variety of ways. Some we see gain self-significant, attention-demanding identities as potential suicides, as drug users, as victims of abuse . . .

"Hey, come off it," some respected colleagues may declare. "These are victims, not somebodies . . . "

"Maybe both?" I might answer. "So lets talk about how to make things better."

The fact remains that unfortunate victims are often totally fixated in their orientations. They have self-concepts and social images which are integral parts of their problem and obstacles to therapy.

These must be dealt with—through the ageless approach of ***tough love,*** if you want to call it that, but more than a wallowing in the poor-me victim and hate-those-others-to-blame claims to fame.

Attention to educational-career exploration and the arrival at rationally defined goals is imperative in helping victims and in preventive programs for others.

CAREER EXPLORATION

Time out to review a few definitions.

Career Education, Career Guidance, Career Development, and ***Career Exploration*** are commonly used terms but are often confused, even though the very words should make them self-defining and distinguish them one from the others.

First off, it used to be that we spoke of ***vocations, vocational guidance,*** and the like. However, for some people, ***vocational education*** had a blue-collar connotation, and it was supposed that the word ***career*** might add more status or dignity to work and could encompass all productive endeavors—home and child care, dentist, engineer, dishwasher, artist . . . everything!

Career Education is a career approach to education. In this all educators—teachers, counselors, administrators, and support staff—are committed to providing students with knowledge, experiences, and productive attitudes relevant to careers.

It is a meaningful, practical, motivational approach to education, having the goal of providing all students with sound preparation for the world of work.

Effective career education requires, first of all, that the school offerings have purpose and be relevant and, then, that students be brought to see this purpose and relevancy in their own lives.

Counselors share the latter responsibility with teachers . . .

Career Guidance is the activity of providing people with career information, while helping them recognize their aptitudes, abilities, and interests, for the purpose of guiding them to reasonable job choices.

Programs of educational and career guidance are found in most schools to one extent or another, coordinated with course registration activities, since training paths and course selection should mesh with tentative career goals.

Career Development refers to the total package of all the circumstances and factors, external and intrinsic, which go into an individual's career choice, progress, and satisfactions.

The work of counselors, teachers, parents, agencies . . . is limited, but significant in providing career education and career guidance to a degree that students can arrive at available choices commensurate with their potential.

Career Exploration, a term I use more often, is simply the exploration of jobs. I favor the term because it implies that the emphasis is on the student doing rather than the guide.

The activity is sometimes individual and sometimes in groups, in school or out, with information coming from any and every source available—people, media, experience, and more. True exploration with active adventure and significant discoveries . . .

Again, you guessed it, each of the seven areas should be a part of it all: With students involved in a variety of ***activities . . .*** With them ***learning*** and ***discovering,*** to their greatest potential . . . With ***excitement,*** and an eye to their survival and the recognition that job satisfaction can have a bearing on many things, including sex life . . . With feelings of ***belongingness,*** both with their fellow explorers and with projected images of future co-workers . . . With discussions and ***voice*** in the direction of the explorations . . . With feelings of pride in the recognitions of the impactful ***somebodies*** they can be in their world . . . And of course, with a realistic ***look ahead*** and the planning it takes to make the good times roll.

Given the circumstances—grandiose or meager—the goal is that students accept responsibility for themselves.

Hopefully, with the focus on careers, each accepts that he/she will be self-supporting or, if handicapped, strives toward whatever degree of self-sufficiency is possible.

Then consistent with this rational commitment to positive self-worth, he/she strives to work it out, utilizing all that counselors and others can provide in the way of information and opportunities for exploration.

In both individual and group orientations, the definitions of reality bear repeating: "What we have to offer is much the same as your teachers and parents offer, opportunities for you to help yourself. We help by making it possible for you to gain information, understand, discover options . . . The work of success is yours to do . . . "

The trying-to-be-all-things-to-all-people dragon can be an unconquerable threat in this area.

Counselors should attempt to maintain an updated awareness of general job trends, referral agencies, and career training opportunities beyond high school. However, delegating them to roles of overwhelmed scapegoats in our vast, free-but-imperfect society wipes out what help might be available from them.

In schools that have not implemented career education, where career guidance programs do not systematically involve the teachers and utilize the related resources of the community, and where ***career development*** is no more than a blurred term which means mail that sounds like it goes to the counseling office, counselors neither save the day nor earn the blame.

And it deserves mention that programs titled "developmental, comprehensive, and coordinated" in school systems where hundreds, or even thousands, in the student population are transferring in and out every year, may be more limited than supposed in accountably achieving outcomes . . .

Through it all, the immature of all ages continue to want it all now, without the work and planning. Some kids have grand spoken goals, and short-term, partying goals are getting in the way.

"What's happening?" I say. And down the line, "What do you want to be doing ten years from now?"

Too often, looking forward to the planned high this Friday night outweighs the nothing they see in the long-range ***look ahead.***

When the somebody they want to be is tied to a monstrous roll of bills they have in their jeans right now instead of a productive, honorable career in their future, their exploration has taken a detour at best.

But when one says, "I want to go into the Air Force. I've been reading up . . . And I met with the officer who was here to talk last month . . . " Or "I'd really like a career in law. From all the tests, I think I could do it."

"I think you could too, Jane [or George, or whatever]," I might respond. "But you aren't right now . . . The plan you have put down on paper seems sound enough. But you aren't really following through. Do you want to share what's happening? . . .

"What is there about the career you have in mind that you think you would like?" I might ask, verifying the student is being realistic, perhaps moving to a worksheet with the familiar seven areas listed as headings . . .

Then, we talk about what it takes to get there, and of how to deal with stuff cluttering up the way.

Kids can't go both ways at the same time, but some try . . .

COLLEGE, OR SOMETHING BETTER

"Well, I have to go to college," most students say, one way or another.

"You have to," I reflect, not disagreeing.

"You're nothing if you don't. I mean, you can't get a decent job or nothing."

"Not necessarily," I say. "Surely, you must have preparation and training for any line of work but not necessarily college . . . "

"My mother says, I am not going to scrub floors like she has had to . . . "

And in contrast there are those who tell me, "My mother and my aunts all went to . . . U. I am expected to, do well. Not that I don't want to, you understand . . . "

College choice is an individual and/or family choice, of course. Counselors help in providing information and in sharpening reality from time to time.

"Don't tell my daughter she shouldn't be going to medical school," one mother told me sternly.

I had not, of course.

Together, the fifteen-year-old and I had reviewed what was ahead for her in the way of training. We recognized that from her test scores and her achievement in school she surely could be a doctor. But when I asked her why she favored this career, she shrugged and said, "I don't know. I'm really interested in lots of things."

"And there is your problem," I said. "One lots of people would love to have. You are intelligent, and you find interest and success in many things. I would bet you could find life-long interest and success in the many faceted career in medicine. However, I am sure you could in many other careers as well."

"Like what?" she said, and I invited her to become acquainted with our Counseling Center's IBM XT computer. With this she set to exploring through the Guidance Information Service subscription in Occupations, Four-Year Colleges, and Graduate School Searches . . .

Although counselors should not be expected to know all the answers about options and opportunities, they should have ample references, media tools, and resource contacts to seek out information as necessary. And they should have delivery systems beyond one-to-one counseling to get information to students.

To many, their career choice seems to be simply working hard in high school and going to college, or just getting out, with or without a diploma, and "getting a job."

Career training has many routes, with an array of opportunities. For some, college can be a frustrating waste of time and money.

The simple declaration, "I'm going to college," without any tentative career goals can be more than misleading. It can prompt students to take electives in high school that only add to their problems.

Loading up on college-preparatory academics, just to keep the college option open, is senseless when students are earning non-college-prep' grades and seem to see no point in the content of what they are supposed to be studying.

As to financial aids, "I know there are all kinds of scholarships, but I won't need any. I've been saving and my parents started a fund. All together we must have nearly six thousand dollars," a girl told me proudly, in this day and age. The colleges she blithely mentioned would cost her more than that in one year, even with scholarships . . .

Students are commonly surprised that their life savings can purchase no more than a semester at the supposed college of their choice.

Students often need help in discovering crucial questions. And they have to learn the questions before they can get the answers.

In this, group work can be of great help in heading off awkward moments by supplying clarifying facts and figures—to which students require repeated exposure to enable adequate impact . . .

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Amongst the group activities I have known titled "Career Days," paramedics swooped from the skies, fire engines roared, lawyers and plumbers (of both sexes) took off work to talk with kids, a TV newscaster referred to his "talks back in 7th Grade with Mr. Peters," FBI agents answered such questions as, "How many crooks have you wasted?" and once afterwards, a suspended underage prostitute shouted from across the street, "They should've had me there. I could've told the little ones like it is, Mr. Peters."

Sometimes buses hauled students through snowstorms to massive college gyms; sometimes the presenters came to the classrooms.

Some were better called "Career Awareness Days," with the presenters asked to try to remember how it was when they were the age of the kids and to tell how they moved forward from that point in their own lives to the successful careers they now enjoy. The stated goal here was not so much to provide facts and figures as to prompt kids to realize that productive careers could and truly must be in their future.

All were worth the time, but none came up to what they could have been.

Students who had preparatory experiences, who at least had learned some of the questions, and who were concerned with the longer view of the ***look ahead,*** took advantage of the opportunities and gained answers, and just as important, a few more questions.

Many did not and later wished they had.

Such one-day or one hour experiences should not be one-shot circuses, but should be part of on-going programs of exploration.

Surely, group work is imperative in exploring. And any explorer knows *success is very much in the preparation for the activity.*

Just as certain, counselors cannot adequately answer the needs in this area by themselves. In all aspects, involvement should reach beyond counselors.

In any school setting, with or without espoused ***career education*** commitments, teachers should have a recognized and active role. Instructional goals should be relevant to careers in the ***look ahead*** for their students.

Without here suggesting specific career-related outcomes which might be measured in evaluating the work, let me share a page of a handbook written when coordinating a city-wide program involving teachers:

Topic:

Career Exploration

Purpose:

To stimulate students to continue to explore a variety of occupational fields with the goal of discovering those which hold significant promise for them.

Background:

Career explorations are of value to those who have not decided on career goals *and* to those who 'already know what they want to be.'

Certainly, it is not wise for students to make up their minds early in life and try to shut out every other possibility.

Decisions as to career choices should be recognized as being subject to change. Many students change their career goals repeatedly while still in school. Later on they are likely to change jobs and even their lines of work a number of times.

Although tentative goals are very much in order, it is important that students keep open minds. They should continue to challenge and test the goals they hold. They should be willing to make changes when they discover new paths which are more logical for them to follow.

However, when it comes to leading students to discard unrealistic goals, a word of caution is in order. Students often have more than superficial needs to say that they are going to be this or that. There is purpose of a sort in their unrealistic goals. Abruptly confronting students with the obvious foolishness of their stated career choices can bring emotional reactions—from students and sometimes from parents who are linked to these choices. . . .

If and when changes are made, the emphasis should not be on doing away with illogical status goals, but instead, on discovering new goals to work toward, ones which can be accepted with dignity as being both significant and realistic.

Suggested Activity:

This week all teachers are being asked to spend at least one-half class period on careers related to the subject matter they teach. Through this joint effort, the students will receive career information from the most qualified resource people available.

Discuss the information called for on the career investigation sheet. Ask the students to complete two such sheets during the week from the information presented by subject matter teachers or from other sources of their own choosing. Send these sheets to the counselors after completion or after they have been reviewed related to their work on the *Four-year High School Plan Worksheets*. . . .

(See Appendix C, regarding media and the development of individual student plans.)

CHAPTER **FOURTEEN**

DARING TO HELP

"What's happening?" comes the first question. Then, after at least a tentative answer, "What can be done to help?" And along the way, in our changing world of technology, life, and interacting society, threats arise, real and imagined.

Let me share a few more happenings, for incidental insight.

SEX FILM

The time could have been just yesterday. It might be again tomorrow. But it was twenty some years ago.

"We have a sex film we are thinking about showing the seventh grade boys," the principal told me. "They call it, 'Boy to Man.' It has been put down for showing in the auditorium next week. But as you know, one of the counselors showed a routine guidance film to ninth graders there last week, and they were so disruptive we turned it off and sent them all back to their rooms. And now this thing is coming, and I am having some misgivings about agreeing to show it."

"I would hate to see this one canceled," I said. "It's long overdue. The schools ought to be doing much more. It is important that the boys have this at least. Maybe it can lead on to better things."

"Right now, I am concerned that it doesn't lead on to worse things. If the group blows up, like it did last week, we will have problems, and that will be the end of it."

"I can't think there will be any problems, especially if it is introduced in an appropriate manner."

"I'll leave it up to you," he told me. "But if anything happens . . ."

I completed the old joke line in my head, " . . . it's your baby." We had used it before when discussing proposed sex information activities.

The day arrived, with three or four hundred seventh grade boys, a half dozen male teachers, and one principal in the auditorium.

"Today is something of a first," I led off, a microphone in my hand, up front. "This is the first time we have had a film for boys about sex. We have had them for girls. And I always felt that was unfair. Each year the girls would get to go off and see a film about the developing human body. But not the boys. And you all know there are changes going on in boys about your ages. It isn't just the girls who change.

"You've all been in the shower room. Some of you have discovered pimples and the fact that some of your friends have started to need deodorant."

Comments like these, needless to say, prompted considerable laughter, and I saw the principal surveying the group from the rear.

"Now, one thing more, before we start the film, let me make an observation. There has been a little laughter. And that's normal and expected. But I think it is as important as any thing we will see today to take a minute or two to consider just what it is that seems funny.

"What's laughter? What is it that makes a thing funny to us?" I asked them. "It's worth your time to think about those questions. It is surprising how few people have the answers, even adults.

"What is there that causes people to suddenly have this burst of emotion that we call laughter?

"Let me suggest, that down deep, in what some people call the unconscious part of us, there are a number of things that we feel uncomfortable about. Things that we keep hidden, to some extent, even from ourselves. And now and then, something sneaks up on that unconscious part of us and releases the emotional response or outburst we call laughter.

"And what do we feel uncomfortable about?" I pondered. "So much so that we might push it down into that secret part of our awareness?

"For one thing, we all have a fear of making mistakes. We know that some of this feeling is deep down inside because every now and then when we see someone else make a mistake, we break out laughing. We see a person take a terrible fall, for example, or hit his thumb with a hammer, and we ought to feel sorry and go to help, and often we do. But first, quite suddenly, it seems funny, and we break out laughing. Usually, covering it up right away because we know it isn't the mature thing to do.

"Some students laugh even when a friend makes a mistake in class . . .

"Another thing we often feel uncomfortable about is the area of sex. And very often, when something is said or seen that is the least bit sexy, there is laughter.

"Now, the film today is going to be about sex, about the sexual changes that occur in the bodies of normal people about your age or a little older. It is natural that you should feel a little uneasy when you think about such things, and that some of you will give way to laughter, of course.

"But keep it down. Part of growing up is learning how to keep your emotions under control . . . "

During the showing of the film, occasional suppressed giggles were heard. Nothing more. And soon after, the principal stopped by my office.

"The eighth grade boys have not seen it yet," he said. "Would you like to give them a showing tomorrow?"

We did with the same introduction. With the same resulting attentive behavior. And the principal stopped by again.

"The ninth grade boys still haven't seen it," he said with a twinkle.

We offered it to our colleague who had had the problem with the group the week before. He simply shook his head and said, "Your baby."

The next day, I opened with the recognition that the film might be a little young for them and that I recognized it would only be a review of things most already knew, but said I thought they might like to see it. Then I discussed laughter much as I had done in times before.

With this group, the room was so quiet that, to me, it was uncomfortable. Hardly a sound was heard through the whole film. The students were, to use the principal's words, "quiet, courteous, and acting their age."

On this score, all continued to go well in future years with never a disruption that might have questioned the showing of such films . . .

But from time to time, questions related to content came from outside.

Three years after the initial use of "Boy to Man," only minutes away from another showing, an assistant principal caught me at lunch to tell me that a father had stopped to see the film and was already seated in the back row. At the mention of the man's name, everyone within earshot was immediately concerned. He was well known through the newspapers as a tireless active citizen, who at present was opposing the use of questionable materials in the schools.

"I heard my son was going to see a sex film today," he told me. "And I am here to see what it is."

"I appreciate your coming," I said, with him looking up at me in disbelief. "It would be of real value to me if you could stay a few minutes after the showing and give me your impression, not just of the film but of what I have to say to the students before and after."

He remained afterwards for almost an hour, with our discussion continuing in my office. He indicated that he had no objections to the film or to what I had to say.

"What I am concerned with is the attempt to bring films that show graphic sex into the schools. I mean sexual intercourse and more. And show such things to little third graders and the like."

I assured him that my understanding from the superintendent was that nothing was going to be shown without the approval of the general public and that I was sure no such graphic films were even being considered for showing to students at any grade level.

"Well, maybe they have you fooled," he concluded. "But they don't fool me and my wife."

When he asked me my view of sex education, I told him I did not favor initiating courses at the middle-school or junior-high levels. I indicated I favored developmental courses all the way through school but opposed starting group instruction concerning the sexual facts of life during the transitional years.

"At the seventh grade and eighth grade," I told him, "in most classes we find a wide range of students in terms of both their physical development and their sexual experiences. Problems are bound to develop where some students are finding out things for the first time, some bluffing and not asking questions even when they don't know, and some others very much in the know. Add to this the fact they are experiencing quite different feelings and needs because of their differences in physical maturity, and the fact that some of them surely needed information earlier, and I just don't think the junior high is the place for the schools to begin.

"But along these lines," I continued, "things being as they are, it is extremely important that students have access to counselors. Problems and questions are bound to arise which are best considered on a one-to-one basis in the privacy of the counselor's office . . . "

He was supportive of this, and I was reminded all over again of how foolish it is to make broad assumptions about people based on what is heard five times removed or read in the newspaper. Instead of a confrontation, I found an opportunity to gain support for our program from an influential activist.

Regarding the film, we went on to attempt additional follow-up through our seventh grade science classes and an on-the-spot question-and-answer session with the counselor and the school nurse responding.

In due time such films came to be seen as "health films" to be shown in the expanded programs of health and physical education classes. The smaller groups lend themselves to greater effectiveness in follow-up orientations.

However, these instructional activities are too seldom coordinated with the work of counselors . .

HOMOSEXUALITY

"It's not what you think. I mean, it's not from a boy," said a tenth-grader, as she saw me glance at the hickey half-covered by the scarf on her neck. Then flushing, "That makes it sound just as wild, I guess. But my cousin and I were just messing around."

Ten minutes later, after she had rehashed the class problem she had supposedly come to talk about, she said, "My cousin is a couple of years older then I am. We were kind of close when we were little. But this is all different. I haven't even seen her for years. Now she is back from San Francisco. And we stayed over at each other's. And I picked up a joint, which we had a little of. I'm not into that . . . But we got the giggles. And then we got serious. I wasn't going to go with it. And she said it was just to find out about things, about who I was . . . And I guess what I need to know is whether now I am a lesbian. Because the way I felt was better than anything, better than I've ever felt with a dumb boy, you know. And I am really scared . . . "

And among the things I said was, "Jan, it's a little early for me, you, or anybody to be putting a label on you about your sexual preferences . . . "

Another time, another place—

"I've always admired this boy," a seventeen-year-old told me after he had come in a number of times, seemingly more to talk than to discuss problems. "It is rather difficult to explain. As a girl you idealize, when you don't actually know her, when you have only seen her around, but you know you love her . . . It is not coming out right . . . The words . . .

"I'm not queer or anything. I just like the boy," he laughed, then with tears swelling in his eyes.

"It's stupid," he pronounced, head upright. "I had the greatest high of my life with a guy. And here I sit telling you I'm not a homo'. You don't want to hear any more of this, do you? I mean there is nothing you can do for anybody in things like this."

"I can't change the world for you, Karl," I said. "But it sounds like you need an opportunity to talk, about things as they really are for you, and that I can offer you."

"And keep it mum?"

"And keep it mum," I confirmed . . .

More than some grand declaration of what should and should not be, ***functional orientations*** in this area begin with the recognition that kids are in the process of becoming.

The urge is there, demanding expression and release. The grand happenings of how, when, where, and with whom are determined by more than attraction to the opposite sex.

"Which opposite sex?" one girl asked me, to make her point. "There are guys out there more sweet and gentle than any girls I know. And some girls stronger and rougher than a lot of boys. And some girls, one anyway, who can make me feel better than any of these locker-room clowns that come around. I can float up there just looking in her eyes . . . I had it going with a boy once like that. But that didn't work out in no happy way . . . "

"You don't have feelings for him anymore," I said.

"I hate him. He really hurt. Told it all around . . . "

Innate predispositions toward sexual expression are present, which may never be clearly defined, and which may dominate or be suppressed or repressed, but there is more. As people experience frustrations and/or satisfactions related to sex and as they learn what and whether to feel, an array of avenues of expression and sublimations evolve.

The resulting likes and dislikes, the reverences and repugnancies, do not always neatly match surrounding views and taboos. Tolerance and understanding can be scarce in some settings.

Decades ago, I became suddenly accepting of homosexuals not so much in spite of my entrenched heterosexual feelings and dispositions as *because* of them. The thought came of what it might be like to be in the body of the opposite sex and find that it was legislated that I could love and have sexual experiences only with males. With such empathic thought, I instantaneously found complete acceptance of the idea that people should be allowed to select their own lovers through mutual consent.

Close relationships between people develop as a result of mutual satisfaction of needs and as a result of them being available to each other. And looking hard at this fact of life can provide understanding in this area. The truth of it prevails, whether we are considering homosexual relationships or heterosexual relationships.

The needs of both parties do not have to be identical, but the willingness to mutually satisfy needs must exist. And the truth is that this does not occur only and always between male and female.

As to the transmission of AIDS through sexual contact, homosexual preference, as such, is not the prime mover. It is the active preference for a multiple-partner life-style.

As to innate tendencies, authoritative pronouncements are left to the geneticists. Physical concerns may well be referred to the medical community. But counselors have a role that must be thought through in all of this in the shaping of ***functional orientations.***

With increased sexual freedom and with attractions active in each of the seven areas of basic need, more homosexual relationships and more incidental homosexual experiences amongst the young will be inevitable. And we may expect that these will be more common among the concerns brought to counselors.

Through it all, labeling is faulty procedure, either on the basis of immediate activity or appearances.

That a girl with the apparent features and silhouette stereotyped as typically masculine should be required to act like a petite, eye-fluttering, submissive boy-worshiper in order to get by is ridiculous. That an ectomorphic, sensitive boy should have to prove himself in contact sports, the same. And just as foolish is any assumption that either has homosexual preferences.

In working with kids bringing concerns in this area, counselors should not lose sight of the ***imperatives.***

Accept.

Listen.

Minimize threat.

Define a rational reality, recognizing that many out there are at work, slanting, teaching hate, and developing scapegoating rationalization to be adopted by the insecure and disillusioned.

Complicating things all around is the inevitable existence of ***reaction formations*** among people in the young counselee's world.

Many have deep emotional investments in this area of concern. Conflicting views arise no matter what is said. Saving insight comes from a recognition that the damners may have much the same base as the practicing advocates of homosexuality, only on an unconscious level.

And in due time, in helping the damners, again do not lose sight of the ***imperatives . . .***

SUICIDE

"We were friends," a boy told me some years ago. "But not so he would do that. I mean, to give me his ten-speed. I told him I couldn't take it. He said I told him once I was going to steal it from him, it was so neat. I told him I was joking. He knew it. I asked him if he was moving or something. He said, 'Sort of,' walking away. And I said, not knowing what else, 'I'll keep it for you, in the back yard.'

"Then he goes and shoots himself. He didn't act like he would do anything like that, not then. He was kind of more cheerful than usual. They tell me I should have known there was something up, but I didn't.

"Now, maybe I can see it. Just giving up that special bike, which I wheeled into his back yard this morning, I want you to know . . . "

Warning signs are sometimes disguised . . . Sometimes confided . . .

"She really bothers me," sixteen-year-old Laura told me the day of this writing. "I shouldn't be in here talking," she pushed the door closed with her foot. "I promised I wouldn't tell anyone. Otherwise, she wouldn't even talk with me, and she gets so down. I don't know what to do.

"She's not really my best friend," arms still clutching her load of books, the girl continued. "But she talks to me and I listen. I don't want to betray her or anything. But now she says she is going to kill herself."

"Laura," I defined, eye-to-eye, "when someone says that to you, all promises are off. When someone threatens suicide, it is reasonable to suppose that this is a plea for help. Lots of help. But no matter what, when a life may be at stake, it is time to bring in the best experts you can find to deal with the problem."

"Well, I have been so worried. And I thought, what if she did it, you know, and I was responsible."

"If she did it, or she does it," I said. "She is responsible. OK?"

"OK," Laura answered, with apparent ambivalence. "But I'd feel awful."

"Sure you would, but you would not be responsible."

"Don't tell her mother. She's most of the problem. Things are really rotten at home for her."

"Her mother will be brought in along the line. But first, I will visit with her, and a caseworker who specializes in such things will see her, today, and we will go from there."

"What can I say to her when she comes at me for telling her secrets?"

"Well, maybe something like, 'Hey, I keep your secrets, right up to the point where you tell me you are going to hurt yourself. I care about you. I don't ever want to look down at a body that used to be you and say, "I kept your secrets." Start being fair to me. I'm worried about you. Maybe those people will be able to help you where I can't. I don't know. But I tried.' And then if you are into hugging, this might be a great moment."

Soon after, as she was leaving and I was reaching for the phone, she said, "I'll tell her it helps to talk with counselors. And," smiling, she turned back, "I'm into hugging, but I've got all these books right now." And she was gone.

I dialed . . .

* * * * *

A time before—

"It's all my fault he killed himself," cried a girl, a year or two younger. He called me. We were on the phone an hour before.

"I don't know if I loved him. I think I did," she shivered more than shrugged. "But he wanted me to do stuff. To go farther all the time than I wanted to go. Well, wanted and didn't wanted. I kind of stopped seeing him. And last night, he was telling me how much he loved me and told me he was going to just commit suicide if I didn't see him. And I knew what would happen if I sneaked out. What would happen with him and me together, I mean, and with my folks if I got caught. So I told him I was sorry but, 'No way.' He said something like, 'You really want it this way?' And I said, 'Take care,' and hung up. I didn't think he would go and do something like that. The phone rang a couple of times, and I didn't answer. So I killed him," she looked up, mascara streaming and then smeared on her hands.

"We may never know actually why he killed himself," I told her. "But I want to make one thing perfectly clear. You did not kill him. You don't do things you know you shouldn't just because somebody threatens suicide. Dead or alive, he was very cruel to put you in the situation he did . . . "

As it turned out, two other girls came in telling similar stories . . .

We never know the full truth as to cause . . .

I recall one Saturday morning sitting much alone at the base of a cliff with the body of a teen-age boy I had known, pondering the why of things, waiting for the sheriff and the boy's father . . . We never knew just what happened the night before.

Threats, attempts, and suicide itself should best be seen by counselors as communications. And from this we are back, or forward, to the initial question in counseling.

What's happening? We listen and try to define for ourselves and for others.

A cry for help? A felt need to punish and/or to be punished? A demand for indulging attention? A further escape when drugs became ineffective or unavailable? A statement of failure in meeting imperatives? An understandable attempt to turn off intolerable pain—physical or emotional? . . .

* * * * *

And then there was the time, late at night, the doorbell rang. My wife answered.

"There's a girl," she told me, arching brows from the bedroom doorway. "Red faced, with puffy eyes. In a lopsided party dress. She says for me to get my husband up because she has to talk."

"My mother brought me over," Karla announced, coming into the living room, with me in pajamas and robe. "She knows we talk. And she knows I'm going to kill myself, as soon as I get the chance."

"How do you plan to do that?" I asked.

"I've got some pills, where I can find them."

"Better fill me in. What's happening?" I knew her as a senior, sensitive, with artistic leanings and high aspirations. An only child of two stable, caring parents . . . And from our talks, I knew she was in the midst of a first total-commitment love with a man a few years older.

"You can't know how I feel. Nobody can."

"Well, we are both here. Try me."

"We made love," she said. "One of those times you know must go forever, and I said something about how we would be long after we were married. And he told me—" her words were lost in tears.

"He told you," I prompted.

"He laughed, as though the thought was preposterous. I didn't even know him. He said if he ever did marry, it wouldn't be to a little slut like me."

"That hurt," I said ineffectually.

"Could I just slip out the back and get out of here? Mother's parked out front."

"Good for her. There's someone who cares about you . . . "

"He told me," she blurted, "that any kid who could use her mouth like that must be working the streets. And all the time I am thinking first and forever, he is thinking filth. That's all it can be now. It's not fair," she hissed, clenching fists. "All I want most can't be, ever. My life is over already. Some little pill just adds a period."

"It's an unfair world," I said. "I can't change that for either one of us. But you have lots going for you, and people who care . . . You are very special. We need you in this world . . . And there is hope that there is the man out there you wanted him to be."

"But I can't ever be the same."

"So join the club," I felt like saying. Instead, it was more along the lines of, "Not quite the same but maybe better, in time."

We talked through the night, to three anyway. And both were in school the next day . . .

Commonly, suicidal persons are dependent for happiness on a special significant other in their lives, at least temporarily. The loss of this seemingly indispensable other can move them to the event.

But suicide has no single cause. Lifetimes and, in some cases, times before, through inherited genes, write the programs for attempts at suicide.

* * * * *

While stressing the need for adequate ***functional orientations*** in areas of counselor concern, no pretense is made at providing all that should be known to help in the infinite variety of circumstances encountered. This is surely true of the brief consideration here of suicide.

However, everything from page one may be thought of as dealing with the subject and what to do about it. Clearly, amongst the danger signs and causes is the statement, "Nothing's *fun* anymore."

For kids with problems, suicide can come to mind as an ***action,*** something to *do* when all else seems hopeless. As a ***discovery,*** an adventure in learning, of a sort . . . As an ***emotional experience,*** of course . . . As a compensation for not ***belonging*** or as a supposed means of making people care—"Then they'll be sorry . . . " As a life-or-death deciding ***voice,*** shouting messages and violating cultural taboo . . . As a means of being ***somebody*** of front-page importance . . . And finally, in the seventh area of basic need, as a statement of hopelessness . . .

The key remedy is in the ***look ahead***—in helping kids cope with an eye to the future and replacing the feeling of hopelessness with active optimism and the pride of making things better. With some, they need just something to look forward to. With some others, the goals are too farfetched to have any rational expectation of success, and this can be a time bomb.

I leave to other volumes, by experts, the growing incidence of teen suicide, although many of these and workshops I have attended deal with intervention rather than doing much about helping kids cope and understand.

All counselors are not expected to be interventionists, important though these may be at moments of crisis. While some are trained as such, the significant point to note is that the counselor's role is not primarily in the prevention of the particular act of destruction but, emphasizing the positive, in preventing this symptom of pain and hopelessness from recurring or from ever happening in the first place.

Unfortunately, with the many other demands on counselors, they cannot be expected to make adequate contributions in this area of need for even identified potential suicides, let alone the many more real but unknown.

At most, they can be expected to take all threats of suicide seriously, and to risk the wrath of the evaluating administrators by putting aside the crap work long enough to listen and make cemented referrals to the medical community and psychotherapists—through responsible parents and/or agency caseworkers.

* * * * *

Even closer to home, we must recognize that one pattern of factors prompting suicide includes deep commitment, lack of success in achieving the commitment goals (whether this be due to limited ability or overwhelming circumstances), and difficulty in accepting failure and coping with accompanying feelings of guilt (justified or not). The hazard of slipping into such a pattern is as present for counselors as for the kids.

We tell them to get out of bad situations, to say, "No!" If things are going wrong, take a turn at trying to make things right, but if it seems hopeless, get out and away.

The jump to suicide can be short and not totally irrational to some. If life is hopeless, get out, the feeling-logic goes.

The lifesaving answer is to say "Yes!" to happier things.

The challenge comes in the search for realistic hope, a bright and visible chance, an expectancy of success in the ***look ahead.*** And when permitted, counselors help in the exploration of viable alternatives.

In gaining ***functional orientations,*** we must understand on many fronts that to fail in lofty commitments can be life-threatening, indeed—whether these be commitments to God, great loves, life-styles, the arts, family, or the helping professions.

"Survive," I've said on occasion, to both young and not so young, "We need you."

CHAPTER **FIFTEEN**

STAYING ALIVE, PROFESSIONALLY

"What do you do," said a boy the morning of this writing, "if your father is slapping your sister around and you are afraid he's really going to hurt her?" He had waited his turn, with the three having academic concerns in front of him duly processed before he spoke. In the doorway a girl and another boy squinted at each other without comment.

"You sit down," I answered, as evenly as I could muster, motioning to the chair in the corner, "and wait until I see what these other people have on their minds. Then we will get the door closed and talk. If I make you late to class, I'll give you a pass. OK?"

I almost added, "And then you can give me a pass to the meeting down the hall that I'm late to already," but I was busy explaining an "irresolvable"—a schedule conflict that meant the angry girl next in line would not be able to take the courses she "absolutely simply had to."

The night before, I wrote, attempting to start this final chapter, "I have just spent the greater part of my Labor-Day weekend working over computer printouts of courses being offered, names of teachers, numbers of courses, etc., charting the mass of information so that I can advise students and request appropriate changes.

"Why aren't Carl Rogers and my counselor trainers back in college here to help me with all of this?"

In my office, I explained to the next student, a boy, that if he wanted to take photography he would have to complete the card I was retrieving from various piles on a shelf, have the dean of students sign it, find the instructor of the course (who taught in a number of different rooms throughout the day), get him to sign it, and return it to me, promptly, because only a few spaces were left in that class.

All the while, peripherally, there were the intense eyes of the boy in the corner, waiting, waiting to tell me of the abuse of his sister, on the verge of swinging to the other side of his ambivalence and walking out, with a shrugging, "You don't give a damn anyway."

And in the midst of Course Approval Forms my midnight writing came to mind, with the painful supplement that not only are great minds and counselor trainers not here to help, they distantly shame me for conscientiously accepting and accomplishing the required work at hand. I ought to be counseling kids, rather than acting as the buffer, over and over, for administrative imperfections or servicing the system in paperwork that could better be processed by secretaries.

As it was, I did get to the boy in the corner. He and his sister were helped. The girl found a second-best course she could take to remedy the "irresolvable," but not without feeling it was somehow my fault. The other boy "couldn't find the photography teacher" and decided not to take the course. And being busy with a student did not really excuse me for being late. "That meeting had been set up well in advance . . . "

Regardless of guilt pangs, conscious or repressed, a hard fact of life, as seen by many school counselors, especially at the high school level, is that if we were not indispensable in getting paperwork done and servicing the system, we would very likely lose our jobs, and the position of counselor would be lost altogether as just another regrettable cutback in school finance.

In March, 1989, the AACD/ASCA Relationship Task Force noted in its report to the American School Counselor

Association Delegate Assembly, "School counselors are trained and educated in counselor education programs for jobs that do not exist . . . "

As Edwin Herr quotes me in *Guidance and Counseling in the Schools* (See Appendix A.), referring to the practice of counseling: "It is not viewed the same by all counselors, teachers, administrators, students, parents, or counselor trainers. What they believe it to be and what they would like it to become, both, differ distinctly in terms of their own differing points of view and their personal and/or professional needs."

My intent is not to shame counselors because they (we) are not doing what I think they (we) should be doing. They (we) get enough of that from a wide variety of points of view—the school administrators, the school board members, the parents, the business community, the social agencies, the kids, the college admissions officers (not to be confused with the counselor trainers across campus in the same colleges), and more.

I am not even saying we should *not* feel guilty for not doing what we know we are trained for and supposed to be doing. The result would be a pointless mirror-to-mirror infinity of "Don't feel guilty, for feeling guilty, for feeling guilty . . . "

On occasion, great minds speak of counselors as ***agents of change.*** Yet, in some settings, we seem helpless to change our own role to what we know it should be.

Issues and debates on the role and function of counselors in our schools continue.

COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATIONS

One thought to put at students in group work is the importance of achieving and behaving in such a way that they will earn good references and recommendations for when they apply for admission to colleges, the military, the job market, or whatever else may require information about them after they leave school.

Recommendations can make the difference all along the way in career development.

But then comes the question of just who composes and gets off these recommendations.

"The counselors know them best," it is said. "They have the broad picture, not just viewing them from one class or activity, and they have their test records and other information about them in their files . . . " Also, "Hey, these are *my kids*. I work with them these years and don't want them to lose out because somebody doesn't do the best by them on paper. I really lay it on thick. For one thing I'm competing with a few thousand prolific writers out there . . . And I dread those parents who come back at you because you must not have put down enough nice things because their kid didn't get it . . . " And this, "I know counselors are busy, but their schedules are more flexible. They can just put things aside and do what has to be done. Sometimes kids just pop in, with yesterday deadlines, and that stuff has to get out."

Once, when I was president of ASCA, I was having dinner in Sausalito with my administrative counterpart, the president of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Frank Malone, of Oklahoma City. I was fishing for a supportive quotable quote for our national newsletter, something that would say how principals saw counselors really helping kids.

"Here's what I can give you, and for publication," he said with a twinkle. "Any principal who remembers what it was like before we had school counselors will never want to be without them."

"You really didn't covet getting off all those recommendations to the colleges," I said. He smiled . . .

Of course, an element of praise was in what he said, but as much or more, a recognition of the burden of imperatives that had shifted over to counselors from the principal's office.

Beyond the time consumed by it all through the years, no task has been more subtly devastating to the high school counselor's role than the completion and submission of, what has come to be called by the worst of college admissions officers, the "counselor's recommendation."

When I wrote "The Practice of Counseling in the Secondary School" (See Appendix A.), and the regional USOE project conferences were reviewing this in defining what was going on in the nation's schools, a representative from Colorado called to give me the word on the reactions. The only part prompting controversy rather than praise, he said, was the section on counselor recommendations. Most agreed with the point I was making, but they felt that counselors were inescapably locked into writing them and that trying to get out of it would be a losing battle, only causing trouble with administrators and colleges. . . . The issue was not recognized in the final published report . . .

My position is that counselors should be, first and foremost, *counselors*, to whom kids can turn with very real problems—including those they would not want known by authorities.

Understated, kids with problems related to secret pregnancy, drugs, crime, sexual abuse, or suicide are not inclined to bring them to those people who may have a major voice in determining whether they get into the college of their choice, the job, the military service, the club . . .

The promise, "I won't tell," is not enough to define confidentiality and actual function.

"Let the recommenders see only the good stuff," is the guiding rule for rational students and their parents. "If people who you are going to have to depend on for recommendations find out the bad, or miss the good, your whole life can be ruined."

"I told him to stop by and see you," a bubbly mother told me at our most recent open house, "at least every couple of weeks. I know how many kids are assigned to you. How are you expected to keep them all straight? The college recommendations and more . . . Look out for your own, I say . . ."

And so, amongst the many, are always those smiling faces at the door, with never a serious problem, offering challenges to busy counselors in the sorting out, trying to determine which ones have problems they are trying to bring themselves to talk about, which are just kids needing attention and want someone to talk to, and which are those who are systematically cultivating the cog who will be making the recommendations.

What is the professional solution? As counselor educator Joe Hollis puts it, "The load is heavy and the work is plenty." And I suspect that many high school counselors now see the function so much a part of what they do that they would not want to pass it along to someone who might not do as well.

The answer lies in informing students and parents that counselors do not make personal recommendations—partly because they wish students to have more broadly based recommendations, but primarily because they want to be approachable as genuine counselors, who clearly do not share the personal problems of students and their families with college admissions officers and the like.

Counselors who are required to provide recommendations should provide ***school reports,*** summary statements of information gathered from teachers and records, with assistance from whatever clerical staff can be available.

In my own case, in getting the job done, I send recommendation request forms to a number of teachers, who have been named by students on their senior information sheets. Receiving the "few lines," called for from the student-designated teachers, I take these home with the information sheets (on which the students have entered honors, activities, awards . . .) and pull all the good stuff together on my computer, concluding with "Information gathered and compiled by Don Peters, Counselor."

This serves the best interests of the students, given the circumstances, and fosters professional role.

FAILURE AND LIMITATIONS

"You know what happens in this world?" Leroy Looper put it to us in a store-front drug counseling center. "Good people go into this type of work, humanitarian, and they want to help drug addicts, especially the young ones, you know? And they pour out their hearts. They pour out their souls. They give their all.

"And the addicts keep shooting dope, dropping reds, smoking pot, goin' the scene with alcohol, and you sometimes wonder, what did you do wrong? . . .

"Our first responsibility is to talk with him and try to tell him all the things that may happen to him out there. . . . 'We been through it. Please don't go.'

"He says, 'Man, I am gone.'

"OK, he goes. OK, 'Bye.' . . .

"I can only work with the motivation that they give me.

"The only thing you can possibly do is to help him to help himself . . .

"And if he cures, don't take the victory unto yourself and say, 'I cured me an addict.' You know what I mean? That's his victory.

"And if he fails, don't take it on yourself, 'I failed that guy.' He failed himself."

* * * * *

No way does this book mean to plunge into reality therapy of San Francisco's Fillmore in the early '70s. But Looper's truth rings true, forever. *We are limited in what we can do.* Forces are at work beyond us. And although it is natural to feel sadness when someone you care about is being hurt through the use of drugs or is simply not coming through when you have tried to help, it is foolish to feel guilty and declare the finality of personal and professional failure.

"Easy to say?" I have been confronted. "We empathize. And as a consequence, when they hurt, we hurt. When they fail, we fail."

Not quite.

We do not have the absolute power to control the action of others.

Rational goals on our part might be to provide opportunities, but not all the opportunities conceivable; to suggest courses of action, but not to compel the actions suggested; or to listen and stimulate productive thought, but not to do the thinking of the counselee.

Failure is a judgment of an outcome at a particular point in time, from a particular point of view.

The fact that things do not work out as we want for ourselves (in regard to any of all those people, things, and ideas we care about) can be painful, indeed. This is true for the kids, their counselors, and all the other folks on this planet.

The word ***frustration*** applies, in all its fury. But often, *successes* are associated with the failures which seem lost because of the emphases.

In the instance of the girl who had the neglected infection from drug use, who learned, "Always be number one on the needle," was this failure or success?

So much depends on your point of view.

Whether you are a counselor with credentials on the wall, a caseworker, a parent, or a neighbor listening to kids who like to talk on your front steps, the only approach that makes sense is to accept people as they are and then to help them move forward to better things, appreciating any and all progress.

We want so much for the kids and for our world. We want things to be as we know they should be. But unrealistic goals cloud our appreciation of significant progress.

At a gathering of ministers to discuss guidance concerns, a learned bishop once put to me, "As I recollect, we have had counselors in the schools now for more than twenty years, and we still have juvenile delinquency."

And I answered, perhaps too quickly, "As I recollect, we have had preachers a good deal longer, and we still have sin."

Some in the room laughed; some did not.

More recently, "If counseling was worth its salt," a school board member told me, "it ought to be able to take care of this drug problem."

I told the board member the story about having preachers a good deal longer than counselors and asserted that it is unrealistic to suppose that we can "fix" kids in the classroom or across the corner of a desk, with all the other forces at play.

Limitations are always with us.

Frustrations come to counselors in a multiplicity of ways. Dealing with the content and dynamics of the interview can be challenging enough. Beyond these, when facilities are deficient, when administrative support is lacking, when the assigned work load takes from counseling activity, and/or when those in the next offices want to be administrators or have resigned themselves to it being just another rat-race, pencil-pushin' job, attempting to provide valid counseling can be downright threatening.

While I have been blessed with better situations than most, I recognize that many counselors suffer overwhelming obstacles. That some slip to the accountable role of administrative flunky in order to survive and keep their sanity is understandable.

In any case, with overwhelming obstacles or with excellent facilities and support, once a counselor starts to gain rapport, through all those imperatives listed in Chapter 7, students talk. They use the counseling opportunity, and the facts of life can start to hit the fan. Suddenly, it is ***reality time,*** and the square root of endoplasm is off passing participles in Bosnia.

The hierarchy of needs applies, and it becomes apparent that all that blessed stuff decreed as necessary to scrape through to graduate does not meet the needs of the moment.

In reviewing such routine concerns as *underachievement*, students may move the subject from *lack of concentration* to *parents' drug use* (or *business*), to *cults*, to *thoughts of suicide*, to *affairs of love and sex*, to *crimes*, *past* and *present*, and on . . .

Things can be touchy when kids tell it like it is in exploring their concerns. More so when some slip to apparent but unverified fantasy. And counselees are not the only ones who experience feelings of threat. The counselors can be expected to have the feelings, as well.

Remaining amongst the living can suddenly become the primary goal for everyone coming in and out of the problem milieu.

What to do?

Among the indispensable imperatives in enabling counseling is to decrease the threat.

If the feelings of threat are unwarranted, redefinitions of the situation may wipe them all away.

If the threat is real, authorities may be brought in (often as required by law), or other strategies may be developed to remedy or cope . . .

Individuals who are the source of threat may be such because they have feelings of threat themselves. Perhaps the cycle can be broken . . .

All this takes time. And the end never seems to be in sight.

Even relative success can bring failure of a sort.

When students are helped, they come back, word gets around that a counselor is in that office, and others come.

Again, whether functioning with overwhelming obstacles or with relatively good facilities and support, a point is reached where the counselor cannot provide adequate service. The door is more and more closed. The counselor becomes more and more abrupt, trying to manage. Painfully, well-intended commitments to "See you tomorrow, for sure," are more and more postponed. And kids at risk come to say that which is crushing to the best of us, "That so-called counselor doesn't care . . . "

Failure? With some definitions, it is inevitable.

A cartoon long on my bulletin board pictures a wedding scene, with the caption, "Until death do us part, or until things get hairy."

But what's "hairy?" And how hairy does it have to get before we give up (or intelligently decide not to be a counselor anymore)? These are questions of definition and degree.

The truth, as practicing counselors know well, is that counseling is what we get to do when the other tasks assigned are done. By this time, if this time ever comes in some settings, many are wiped out, with the energy and inspirational reserves depleted, and counseling does not get done.

Helen Bain, NEA President the year I was ASCA President, once told me that she had been a high school counselor, but her principal had her doing so many other things she went back to being an English teacher. She found she could do more counseling as a teacher than she was allowed to do as a high school counselor.

From happenings on the very day of this writing, I know I sometimes stay away from calling in specific kids who need counseling because I will not be able to allot adequate time to stay up on their needs and might disillusion more than help them. Already, those coming in on their own are more than I can handle to our mutual satisfaction.

Some kids die because of the sins of omission of the current system . . .

I recall Bill Dugan, then executive director of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, saying, as we were on a panel for the American Association of School Administrators in 1971, that counselors came into being because school principals needed "wild cards" to play as they needed them. Also, at that convention, I recall an exceptional administrator from New Jersey saying that school counselors had been doing a great job, a fabulous, commendable job, of holding together a system of education so rotten and so incapable of meeting the needs of children and the nation that it should have been allowed to explode or tumble so that we might have the opportunity to make something better.

Failure? Or Success?

"In any event," as I said in the introduction in this book, "my wish is not to convert or sway but to stimulate reactive thought on what ought to be . . ."

"ROLL" AND FUNCTION

With the possible exception of some maniac about to press the bomb button, the greatest threat to the future of America is the decision-maker who distorts the role of counselors in our schools, making unrealistic and wasteful demands, which exclude responsible attention to the major concerns stressed in this book.

Commonly, tragically, the burden of paperwork for special programs, college entrance, registration, schedule changes, and sometimes even the original semester course scheduling has been passed along to school counselors, and the soaring need for counseling and sound guidance gets put aside.

Instead of using counselors as motivators of constructive, positive change, overwhelmed administrators are inclined to use them as bottom-rung administrators to get paperwork done and to serve as rationalizing buffers between the kids and the establishment.

"Further complicating our situation," I once wrote in *The School Counselor*, "is the fact that at times counselors are forced to alienate those who are the evaluators, those to whom we are accountable in practice. When counselors are primarily obligated to work in behalf of students, there is at least a tendency for them to become a threat to the very administrators who evaluate them. Once in conflict with the very individuals to whom they are accountable, they soon experience threat themselves. At that point, perceptions become restructured and distorted all around. Relationships are strained; educational professionalism is put to the test . . . "

Too many examples flood my mind, bring mixtures of fury and despair. But just one, not too heavy—

When I was a junior high counselor, a few years ago, an administrator told me that on top of already extensive high school registration tasks, I was to copy all the information onto scanner sheets for his computer. I resisted, noting that he had secretaries and student-aide help, and I did not. I did not make mention of the fact that at that moment I had a girl in my office who had just told me she had been sexually assaulted, a mother was waiting to see me about her son dropping school, and I had promised to see two students that afternoon I was not getting to—a boy who was wiping himself out sniffing glue and a girl who was headed for a fight after school.

I told the administrator I had seen that all the registration and course selection forms were completed, with weeks of orientation, guidance, and counseling going into this, but with the other things I had to do, I felt his clerical staff should take care of marking all the thousands of little ovals on the computer scanner sheets. The alternative was for me to either mark them all or have the students do it and check for the inevitable errors.

My primary concern was, again, trying to hold the line.

I reminded him that the previous year, the administrators had agreed that the high schools would take care of marking their own scanner sheets. Exasperated, he talked on top of anything else I had to say.

"Don't worry about it," he repeated, going down the hall. "We'll take care of it. We'll do it for Don Peters. Nobody else is objecting to doing it this year. But we will do this for *Don Peters*."

And at that moment, my definition of self came to mind. I resented his sarcastic inference that I was just trying to get out of work, but indeed it was for Don Peters. The self is everything a person cares about.

"Do it for the kids," I said, but he was not listening. "Let counselors be counselors rather than administrative flunkies . . . "

Not long after, he moved on to the central administration office, and I was transferred to a different school . . .

Let it suffice to say, attempting to maintain rational definitions of the role and function of practicing counselors is uphill in the real world . . .

Professional statements of ***role and function*** will and should continue to be written and rewritten, pondered and debated, providing guidelines as to what should be and should not be from various points of view. Yet, a futility exists in the effort, a pointlessness of that paper, and this, on the shelf.

The answer to the survival of the profession and of the individual counselors lies in an understanding that the words must be thought of not as nouns, but as verbs. Those who survive to serve are not totally hung up on statements of role and function—extensive or restrictive. They do not see these statements as conditions of ethical reality, of circumstances having to be right before much of anything can be accomplished. They are not consumed in martyrdom because the role is disfigured and the function corrupted, disheartening though this may be. They have learned to *roll* with the punches of both the dynamics of the job and the destructive foolishness of some of the decision-makers. And they *function*, not just in spite of it all but more *because* of it all.

A boy once jabbed me a good one in the hall.

Classes had just started for the morning. In the relatively empty hallway, I saw him push by a teacher who I knew had had a relatively good relationship with him. I thought I had a good relationship with him as well.

"What's happening?" I said, stepping into his path, calling him by name.

Then, he hit me as he went by.

My image smarting along with my shoulder, I waived a quiet, "I'll get back to you," to the teacher and followed the boy.

I found him crouched in the corner of a rest room.

Tears streaming, he said, "Just leave me the fuck alone."

"Hey, that I mean to do," I said, rubbing my upper arm. "But right now, we need to find some place to get you out of the way for a time to cool down. You hit somebody else like that, and they're going to smear you."

"I don't care," he said.

There was more to know . . . Amongst it all, his mother had killed herself . . .

I have had much the same experience with administrators—overwhelmed, not wanting to look at their own situation and not wanting anyone else to look . . .

Most important in this business, we *roll* with the punches and *function* as best we can at the moment. And there are punches that hurt more than the physical kind.

Undeniably, the basic responses to frustration are with us—all the gradations of flight and aggression. Commonly, in our civilized setting, the tendency is a combination of the two, to *quit* and to *blame*.

When asked about the student dropout problems in our schools, I have replied that most of our dropouts are still in school. I am inclined to say something of the sort about counselor burn-out problems.

Surely, I have known many who have given up, who have quit trying to be the counselors they want to be, who angrily blame others for their circumstance, but who stay on with the title and perform the limited but worthwhile function of doing what administrators need to be done.

Some have, indeed, quit the scene and gone on to other things. Many have angrily fixed blame, but I am pleased to say I know of none who have become physically violent.

I wish I could say that, even with the endless array of duties and opportunities to help kids in the front-line position of school counselor, I knew more who found additional time to attempt to make changes in the system and to innovate, developing more efficient methods and media tools with which to improve the situation.

Is the situation hopeless?

No more than the world in which we live.

An oversimplification, perhaps, but we must *roll and function.*

In general, trying to practice what I preach, I tell myself and suggest to others: Have outlets to handle stress. And (forgive me; sometimes you have to be trite to be right) watch your diet and get your rest.

Don't let counseling be your entire life. Dealing with kids with problems can put us in jeopardy at the whim of a disturbed child, parent, or anyone else looking for a scapegoat.

No matter what your views of the 1990 verdicts in the McMartin Pre-school case, understand that *anyone* can stand accused.

Helping *at risk* kids, requires counselors who are willing to be *at risk* themselves.

Don't hide under the meteorite shelter. But know the law, and take care. It can be an unfair world.

Be an active member of your professional associations. Without them, very simply, we do not have a profession . . .

Use the seven-point formula, and make it fun.

Get the job done, but take time to exercise ***voice.*** Make recommendations. Document your own priorities and share them with administrators.

In helping bosses to break away from magical thinking and establish realistic priorities, formally request, "Tell us what you want us to stop doing to make room for what is being added." But don't project a guilt trip on them if they can't. They are usually swamped.

As to ***functional orientations*** in working with school administrators, counselors must build their own in the light or the darkness of their immediate circumstance. Surely, blanketly expecting professionalism in response to criticism can be disastrous.

I once asked William Glasser if he had suggestions for counselors in their dealings with administrators. He summed it up in, "Don't take them problems. Take them solutions."

Document your proposals on how to make things better.

Then, regardless of the prescribed or inferred role and function, ***roll and function.***

More *because of* rather than *in spite of* the hindrances and imperfections in the world, roll and function.

Develop and refine sound ***functional orientations.*** Bring the best that you have, from both training and experience, and apply it to the problems at hand.

To those readers, who are not school counselors, take that initial step and discover *what's happening* in your own locale. In terms of your own definitions, determine whether enough counselors are available and busy with what should be their primary responsibility, *counseling kids.* Look to see if they have an adequate secretarial and clerical staff. If they do not, professional salaries are being squandered, and the degree to which counseling services are available is misrepresented.

To my counseling colleagues, I would like to leave you with the challenge of redefining the American dream in your work of *counseling kids.*

Instead, for now, *roll and function.*

APPENDIX A

THE PRACTICE OF COUNSELING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

In 1978 the U. S. Office of Education contracted with the American Personnel and Guidance Association to conduct a project which would conclude in a comprehensive report on the status of guidance and counseling in the nation's schools. The first phase was to develop and publish a series of issue papers authored by "key leaders in the profession." (Peters, it may be noted, was the only practicing school counselor among the sixteen selected and assigned to write a paper.) In the second phase, the papers were reviewed and discussed by some 500 guidance supervisors, school administrators, counselor educators, parents, and practicing school counselors in ten regional conferences. Then finally, a summary report was written and published.

Therein was noted, "that regional responses to Peters' analysis of the realities of the role of the secondary school counselor were quite supportive."

The paper is offered here for ready reference in reviewing the field and commonly raised professional issues.

Additionally, the readers are urged to consult the current role statements and position papers of the American School Counselor Association. (These are available from the address provided at the close of Appendix A.)

THE PRACTICE OF COUNSELING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

The practice of counseling in the secondary schools of America should be considered to be a central, enabling function. It is a central function because of its indispensable relationships to the students, to the operation and offerings of the school, and to the real worlds of both today and tomorrow. It is an enabling function because it assists students to cope with a wide variety of chronic and acute life problems which commonly hinder learning in schools, because it assists students to find valid purpose and rewarding direction in their lives, and because it prompts individual planning and preparation for the achievement of realistic goals.

While assisting students to avail themselves of the personal and economic opportunities of our increasingly complex society, the practice of counseling in the secondary schools is a requisite in enabling success—the success of individual students, the success of schools in meeting the educational needs of people, and the success of our government in the continuation of a free and productive America.

In no way can counseling in the schools be considered as "ancillary" or "supplementary." It is not something added on, a "frill," that might somehow be discarded, no more than teaching or administration. There can be no question of the necessity of school counseling. With the continuation and increasing complexities before us, the question is more one of how we can be most effective in doing what must be done.

GENERAL WORKING DEFINITION

The practice of counseling is not the same in every secondary school. It is not viewed the same by all counselors, teachers, administrators, students, parents, or counselor trainers. What they believe it to be and what they would like it to become, both, differ distinctly in terms of their own differing points of view and their personal and/or professional needs.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Guidance and counseling functions have always been with us. The Socratic techniques of thousands of years ago, the forest image of adult and child seated on a log, reasoning together . . . all are not foreign to the spirit of what we try to do today. Effective schools have always tried to utilize helping relationships and the counsel of caring, wise adults in providing for the immediate and future well-being of both individual students and our total society.

As with other aspects of education, guidance and counseling functions have increased in their complexities as an inevitable consequence of the evident increasing complexities and expanding opportunities in life.

During the first part of this century, through the time of World War II, guidance functions in the schools were performed by teachers, some of whom were more or less specialists in teaching courses in occupational exploration and all of whom took part in attempting to guide youngsters toward productive, moral, and patriotic behavior. Media support was limited, but "right living" literature and Norman Rockwell Boy Scout calendars played a significant part.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, those evolving as specialists in guidance were being schooled in philosophical orientations which emphasized counseling and conceptual understandings of the individual student in greater depth. "Non-directive" and "directive" counseling won champions in theoretical arguments, but in the schools, "eclectic" counseling, more commonly, was winning out. That is, counselors used the best of what they learned, to do the best job they could, with what they were required to do in the time that they had to spare.

In the late 1950s, with the passage of the National Defense Education Act, suddenly, there were many additional full-time, relatively well trained counselors. Unfortunately, the government-sponsored counselor institutes responsible, in part, for the increased number of trained counselors in the schools neglected the fact that counselors would not have self-determined roles in the schools and that administrative priorities would not be the same as those imposed by counselor trainers.

The idea of having administrators and counselors attend the institutes in pairs, developing *together* their school guidance and counseling programs, was rejected. The fact that busy principals do not have the time nor the inclination to be schooled by "idealistic" counselors just back from a summer of "theoretical" training was ignored in favor of turning out twice as many counselors.

The result was inevitable. Principals assigned counselors many tasks they needed done, whether these fit under the guidance and counseling heading as the emerging profession saw them or not. Resistance on the part of the most devoted counselors and attempts to incorporate methods not appreciated by administrators tended to alienate administrators and further hindered the healthy development of guidance and counseling programs.

As counselors attempted to act in behalf of students in seeking alternatives to authoritarian squelching in ameliorating behavior problems and called for curriculum changes in answering career-preparation needs of students and the nation, at least a few principals and teachers of established styles and preferences provided opposition.

In general, however, counselors have been dramatically successful. Most criticism turns out to be that people want more, not less, of what counselors have to offer. Students want counselors to be more available to them for assistance with their problems as they see them. Teachers want support in seeing that students are properly placed in their classes and that students "apply themselves." Administrators want "a smooth ship." . . .

Counselors have been presented as being "all things to all people." The result of such overwhelming expectations is that they are often judged on the basis of what they do not do, rather than on the basis of what they do accomplish.

Role, therefore, and the actual assignment of duties become continuing concerns in understanding the practice of counseling in the secondary schools.

THE ROLE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Stemming from the inconsistencies in the training of counselors, in their own personal styles and makeups, and in what they are enabled to do by administrative assignments and funding, there are never-ending questions related to their professional role.

After extensive study of role and function, the American School Counselor Association approved a comprehensive statement of policy on this subject in 1964 . . . a statement of generally accepted goals among school counselors . . .

Quoting in part from this statement (amended by the author of this paper only in the updating of pronouns suggesting gender):

"***School counselor*** is a term used in this policy statement to designate a counselor working in a secondary school setting, concerned with and accepting a responsibility for assisting all pupils, and having as his/her major concern the developmental needs and problems of youth. Counseling is perceived as involving a dynamic relationship between counselor and counselee, and thus the school counselor accepts the responsibility of involving him/herself in the lives of pupils with clear and humble knowledge of the implications . . .

"The counselor is dedicated to the idea that most pupils will enhance and enrich their personal development and self-fulfillment by means of making more intelligent decisions if given the opportunity to experience an accepting, non-evaluating relationship in which one is helped to better understand him/herself, the environment he/she perceives, and the relationship between these. Counseling is essentially such a relationship. The school counselor views him/herself as the person on the school staff with the professional competencies, behavioral science understandings, philosophical orientations, and position within the school necessary to provide such help to pupils.

"The school counselor is not, nor presumably shall he/she ever be, bound to accept any one philosophy regarding him/herself and the society and world in which he/she lives. There are certain philosophical tenets, however, held by all professional school counselors, and consistent with many philosophical positions . . .

"1. Each pupil is a unique individual. His/her behavior is purposeful and represents his/her attempts to develop in society as he/she perceives it.

"2. Each pupil has a right to acceptance as a human being, regardless of the nature and results of his/her behavior, beliefs, and inherent characteristics.

"3. Each pupil has a right to individual self-development and self-fulfillment. The extent and nature of self-fulfillment is directly a function of the extent to which the individual possesses real and informed personal freedom.

"4. Each pupil has a right to self direction as well as responsibility for making decisions and living with the consequences of these decisions . . .

"The strength and health of a democratic society is ultimately dependent upon the contributions each of its members makes to others. If in a democratic society each individual is to be free to decide for him/herself the contributions he/she will attempt to make, then it is essential that each individual have substantial self-understanding and personal perspective on which he/she can base his/her decisions . . .

"The school counselor assists others to develop according to their values in a democratic society of which the counselor is also a member. The counselor attempts to recognize clearly his/her own values and needs, and strives effectively to distinguish them from those of his/her counselees . . .

"The school counselor has the responsibility to—

"1. Assist each pupil to meet the need to understand him/herself in relation to the social and psychological world in which he/she lives . . .

"2. Assist each pupil to meet the need of accepting (defined as being able to behave consistent with) his/her aptitudes, interests, attitudes, abilities, and opportunities for self-fulfillment.

"3. Assist each pupil to meet the need to develop personal decision-making competency . . .

"4. Assist all members of the school staff to understand the importance of the individual pupil and to provide information, material, and consultative assistance aimed at supporting their efforts to understand pupils.

"5. Determine the influence of the school program on pupil educational and psycho-social development, and to convey such information to other staff members.

"6. Inform other staff members of significant changes in the school and non-school environments which have implications for instruction and the psycho-social well-being of pupils, and to participate in related program development.

"7. Assist parents to understand the developmental progress of their child, his/her needs, and environmental opportunities, for purposes of increasing their ability to contribute to their child's development.

"8. Interpret to the community the importance of consideration for the individual and the contribution of the school counseling program to that end . . . "

Even if counselors were not required to accomplish extensive tasks beyond the many referred to in this role statement, these alone would be overwhelming if it was expected that each must be pursued to accountable completion.

It remains for each counselor in his/her own work setting to determine and/or discover what duties will actually be required of him/her to perform.

Related to this, the Education Task Force of the 1971 White House Conference on Youth recommended, "School counselors should be made more readily available to *all* students. The roles of these counselors should be defined at the local level with *participation from the students to be served*, the employers, and the counselors. The primary concern of counselors should be the worth and the well-being of the students. Therefore, counselors should be free of clerical and administrative duties and should direct their major attention to working directly with and for students."

In 1973, the Governing Board of ASCA approved an updated role statement for secondary school counselors . . . This paper is intended to neither be in conflict with nor duplicate the newer ASCA role statement. It is initiated independent of and apart from the authors of the very commendable ASCA document, currently available from ASCA or in *The School Counselor*, Vol. 21, No.5, pp.380-386.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE OF COUNSELING

A somewhat dissociated view of the practice of counseling in the secondary school suggests that it can be summed up under the "3 C's" headings of consultation, coordination, and counseling. More realistically, eight headings or general areas of activity provide a comprehensive, yet still abbreviated view:

Counseling and group guidance,

Registration, curriculum, and special-course placement, Testing,

Records,

Conferences and consultation,

Coordination, liaison, and public relations,

Professional growth, program development, research, and innovation, and

Evaluation and accountability systems.

Counseling and Group Guidance

1. School counselors usually give top priority to providing counseling for students who have serious, urgent, and/or chronic problems, especially when these students are requesting counseling help themselves. However, this is not always possible due to scheduled testing, scheduled group work, responsibilities for registration for the coming school year or semester, conflicting administratively assigned duties, and previously scheduled appointments with others requesting help.

   Related to this, it is important that counselors work an extended school year and be on duty in advance of the opening of school to preview records of incoming students, preparing to meet with those likely to need special assistance.

2. Counselors often work with teachers in providing units on careers in various classes.

3. Using group guidance and/or individual counseling methods, counselors commonly work with all the students they are assigned in developing and refining high school plans and post-high-school goals.

4. Often, counselors are involved in providing a variety of orientation programs for students entering or

about to enter some new phase of educational experience.

5. Counselors interview students who have been referred as nearing failure in school work or underachieving, as time permits, and attempt to stimulate appropriate action by the student counselees and by related staff members. Alternatives and possible schedule changes are often considered, but school rules, administrative pressures, and/or the recognized worth of staying with a job once accepted tend to prod both the counselor and counselees toward solutions that do not require changes in established schedules.

6. Bulletin boards are often maintained, and other visual and/or audio media are sometimes developed and utilized by counselors in providing informational group guidance.

It is significant to note that the content of counseling and group guidance may be related to education, careers, and/or personal concerns and that the three inextricably overlap and are dependent on one another.

Registration, Curriculum, and Special Course Placement

1. Using group methods and/or individual contacts, nearly all counselors (except for those who work only with seniors) are involved in registering students for the coming school year or semester. Many are totally responsible for the registration of the students they are assigned. They are not only responsible for assisting students to make appropriate and reasonable selections of courses but for certifying that all forms have been completed and that entries are administratively correct. Counselors commonly contact students to clarify apparent misunderstandings and to suggest changes consistent with intent and academic aptitudes. When counselors are obligated to give advice that is not followed,

notations may be expected to be entered in order to accountably verify these actions when and if faulty recollections create questions in the future.

While all of this may seem clerical in nature, there are many factors involved, varying from school to school, and counselors have come to accept the truth that a job well done in registration heads off many pointless problems that would otherwise come to the counselor in the future, demanding time-consuming and sometimes impossible solutions.

2. Counselors assigned to work with seniors are similarly responsible for college entrance paper work and/ or assisting students with their completion of job entry application. (Related concerns are discussed later in this paper in the section on issues.)

3. Counselors recommend curriculum changes to decision-makers, as appropriate, in attempting to answer the needs of students. Their responsibilities, opportunities, and activities in this vary considerably from school to school.

4. In gaining the knowledge necessary to adequately advise students as to the options available and to make recommendations calling for curriculum revisions, counselors make considerable investments in time. They must be acquainted with all staff members, be familiar with all procedures, and stay up-to-date on the content of all present offerings and possible future offerings under consideration. They must be familiar with prerequisites of all offerings within the school system and of the post-high-school opportunities students may be expected to consider.

Some schools have well coordinated guidance programs with ample professional leadership which fosters necessary counselor orientations. Some do not, and counselors must seek out enabling information on their own.

This is an area of time-consuming obligation that is often overlooked by those who are not involved in the field as practicing counselors.

5. In attempting to meet the current needs of students throughout the school year, counselors screen many requests for course and/or schedule changes and make recommendations concerning same after consulting with the students involved and, as appropriate, with related staff members.

   It is significant to note, however, that the actual changes are made by administrators, or should be, and not by counselors. Counselors should be information-givers and people with whom students may think through their problems in a confidential, non-threatening setting, and not authority figures for students to manipulate or argue with to get what they initially suppose they want.

Testing

1. Most, if not all, school counselors are involved in the administration of group standardized tests. Responsibilities in this area include: the interactions that enter into the selection of the tests, the extensive preparations, the detailed scheduling and special assigning of personnel (sometimes done by administrators, more often done by counselors, with administrative review), the care and secure inventory of test materials, the pre-test briefing of students, the administration of make-up tests to those who are absent and to those who transfer in at later dates (often requiring weeks of counselor time), the processing and/or scoring, the recording and reporting of results, the interpretation of test results to all concerned, the actual utilization of the information yielded in guiding the individual students toward available opportunities, and the use of test information in attempting to gain necessary and appropriate academic opportunities and training for the students.

While counselors use and understand the merits of standardized tests in their work, it is significant to note that a number of tests counselors are commonly required to administer are not primarily for guidance and counseling purposes, although they may appear to be so on "guidance and counseling and testing" budgets.

2. Counselors are called upon to deal with those who raise questions and for one reason or another voice opposition to tests and those who wish to challenge the validity of specific test scores. Some such individuals are rational and some are irrational in their inquiries, some constructive and some destructive in their intent, but the tasks of dealing with them can be very time-consuming and frustrating.

3. An undetermined number of counselors are qualified to administer and do administer *individual* intelligence, ability, aptitude, and psychological tests, as appropriate, time permitting, to assist in their work with students.

4. All counselors use test information in the guidance and counseling of the students and provide test consultation services for teachers and administrators.

Records

1. School counselors are responsible for the organization, development, and maintenance of files of cumulative record folders on all students assigned. This includes the establishment of new folders for new students, review of the contents of all folders, and provisions for both reasonable availability of information to the authorized staff and maintenance of procedures insuring security.

The purpose of these cumulative records is not administrative. These records exist solely to assist in the guidance and counseling of the individual students. While they are considered to be the property of the school, they should be freely open to the students they are meant to serve and to their parents.

2. School counselors commonly record the dates of interviews and conferences they attend. Such entries may be made within the content of the cumulative record folders, along with notes expected to be of value to future counselors and others of the authorized staff in attempting to assist students.

   No entries should be made for any other purpose than attempting to assist students. No entries should be made which might betray counseling confidences.

3. School counselors are responsible for the maintenance of files of the group results of all standardized tests administered by counselors.

4. In some schools they are involved in the processing of honor roll determinations or of National Honor Society member selection and/or are responsible for the calculations and updating of class rank on all students assigned.

5. They should be responsible for the orientation of the authorized staff as to what records are available and the meaning of entries and contents. There should be an orderly system through which these orientations are accomplished and updated, especially in regard to staff members new to the school each year.

   Secretarial assistance is sometimes provided counselors in the accomplishment of records duties. Too often, this is insufficiently provided or nonexistent, and counselors are taken from professional duties to accomplish "what must be done."

Conferences and Consultation

1. School counselors meet with parents upon request and provide telephone consultation, as time permits.
2. They provide consultation services to teachers and other faculty members, related to concerns within the areas of their assignments and expertise, as time permits.
3. They are often expected to arrange for parent-teacher conferences, as necessary, and to coordinate and chair these conferences.

Coordination, Liaison, and Public Relations

1. School counselors strive to become currently aware of the total school environment, as much as practical considering the time limitations, and attempt to foster action to improve the total guidance program.
2. They maintain working relationships with other counselors, supervisors, administrators, and related community agencies, as necessary in assisting individual students and in providing continued adequate services.
3. As requested and/or authorized by their supervisors, they attend a variety of community coordinating meetings and provide liaison in the area of community and professional activities.
4. They often are expected to provide coordination and leadership in the total career development program of the school.
5. They often share ideas and information concerning current procedures, coming changes, and productive innovations with colleagues, in their joint efforts to coordinate activities both within their buildings and among the various units of their school systems.

6. They often provide guidance and counseling orientation presentations, related to testing, educational-career planning, and student problems at school and community functions.

Professional Growth, Program Development, Research, and Innovation

Activity in these areas is often encouraged and authorized but without continuing, specific assignment.

Evaluation and Accountability Systems

Often school counselors are too busy with other duties to evaluate and record their own accomplishments.

Their work is most commonly evaluated by administrators on the basis of the correctness of forms completed, the degree to which the number of schedule changes is minimized (with little thought to the need-fulfilling purposes of changes), the incidental comments of parents and others in the community, the effectiveness shown in carrying out administrative directives, and the lack of complications caused by group testing and other visible counselor-conducted activities.

Understandably, counseling that heads off trouble goes unnoticed, and counseling that results in wise decision-making is hard to substantiate.

It is important to school counselors that they develop and/or update job descriptions for which they may reasonably be held accountable. These should be such that they receive annual formal administrative approval and authorization. Further, counselors should develop, refine, and use systems of record-keeping which insure evidence of satisfactory completion of the work they have been assigned or, in some cases, of the unrealistic expectations imposed upon them.

ISSUES AND CURRENT CONCERNS

(Many aspects of the practice of secondary school counseling are dealt with in other papers of this APGA/USOE project. However, the following are of such concern that overlapping considerations may be appropriate in fairly representing this topic. If and when the points of view presented here do not mesh with or may even appear to be at odds with other papers, such inconsistencies should not be seen as matters that must necessarily be resolved among the authors of the original papers, but matters to be recognized as differences within the profession, to be resolved by future interactions.)

Relationships

The development and maintenance of relationships with many different people are necessary to success in school counseling. With inevitable limitations in time available and in the capacities of counselors, the nature of these relationships and the priorities of their importance become crucial questions which repeatedly require consideration.

Students: The relationships with students are indispensable tools of school counselors—relationships with the individual students receiving counseling and with the group, inasmuch as the counselor image held by the various elements of the student body will influence decisions concerning who will come to the counselor and what sort of problems will be brought with them.

Professional school counselors are devoted to the formation and utilization of relationships as outlined in the 1964 ASCA statement (representative portions of which are previously quoted in this paper). Yet, the number of students allotted and the extent of the added noncounseling responsibilities assigned hinder the attainment of such goals. Any consideration of student-counselor relationships must recognize that there are human limitations on the degree to which counselors can extend themselves. The prolonged stress of empathizing with a great many students who are attempting to cope with and resolve problems must be expected to alter both counselors and their relationships with students—whether these problems be due to intolerable circumstances, faulty outlook, inadequate alternatives, destructive and unproductive behavior, or simply developmental resistance to rational planning and acceptance of responsibility.

The mere fact that a counselor is involved substantially with a number of students alters his/her relationships with other students. The fact that a counselor can only be one place at a time is too often ignored, and students finding the counselor occupied with others may tend to feel, "The counselor doesn't care about me." The counselor commendably busy with fifty students may have hundreds assigned with whom no relationships have been cultivated.

Group procedures and the development of media become imperative if formation of productive relationships with the greater numbers are to be attempted.

Parents: Relationships with parents are secondary to those which counselors attempt to maintain with students . . .

School counselors meet with parents upon request and provide telephone consultation, as time permits.

It often becomes apparent that parents need counseling assistance as much as do the students. In the interest of helping students, counselors attempt to provide parental consultation when this is possible and practical. They attempt to make referrals and suggest where parents may be expected to find additional help.

Counselors do not see it as their role either to blindly support parents or to assume responsibility as surrogates for ineffectual and/or absent parents. However, through counseling with the students and consultation with parents, counselors often help students and their parents to increase their understandings of both themselves and each other, and at times, counselors do provide supplementary guidance, important to the students' well-being, which may be viewed as compensatory for lack of home and family.

Relationships with parents should not be such as to violate and destroy relationships with students. In fulfilling their professional role, counselors keep the confidences of the students. If this were not the case, there would be no confidences to keep, and the counseling assistance provided students would be severely limited.

Teachers: Counselors must be able to confer with the teachers of their counselees in their shared efforts to provide needed help. Counselors must know the strengths, weaknesses, and general styles of the teachers with whom they will work (often from fifty to one hundred individuals, with the staff changing year after year).

Teachers must know the services they can expect and not expect from counselors and should understand their own part in the total guidance program of the school.

Relationships with teachers can be seen to be so important in gaining help for students that some counselors give these higher priorities than they give relationships with students. Recognizing the unrealistic loads often assigned counselors, there are views that suggest school counselors should be "learning facilitators" rather than counselors, with the emphasis on working with the total staff in fostering and coordinating success of students in school.

However, most school counselors continue to stress individual counseling and group guidance as their primary functions—while, at the same time, attempting to work with the total staff in the students' behalf.

Clearly, counselors should be free to attempt to stimulate change in the students' condition in school whenever this is blatantly the unjustified cause of the students' problems, rather than be expected to use counseling to enable the students to endure.

Job security, also, deserves mention as a significant factor in the need for satisfactory counselor-teacher relationships. Counselors are commonly considered to be "teachers" in contract negotiations. The teachers' understanding and acceptance of the initial assertions of this paper can be necessary to the continued success of the schools of America.

Administrators: Administrators should attempt to minimize the clerical and administrative tasks required of counselors and do whatever possible to foster professional proficiency through provisions for secretarial help, counseling center facilities, and media support. They should require a mutually developed job description of counselors, with review and possible revision of same, periodically.

In every school and school system, there should be designated coordinating responsibilities to specific individuals, in recognition of the total guidance and counseling program. These responsibilities should not be left generally to the principals and never to individuals who are not professionally qualified as school counselors and not currently aware of counselor goals, accomplishments, and needs.

Counselors are obliged to be accepting of the fact that administrators have a more broadly based view of what is necessary and possible in the school and the school system. In assisting the administrators in maintaining an accurate base of understanding, counselors have an obligation to provide informational recommendations and to offer suggestions for solutions to apparent problems.

Administrators should not have cause to see recommendations as criticisms against which they must defend themselves or previously established systems. Recommendations and requests for funding, support, or change should be weighed on their merits and acknowledged.

Whether or not they are followed, all major recommendations should be submitted in writing and a record maintained for possible future reference.

Administrators should respect the confidentiality of the counseling relationships and should not direct counselors to perform authority-figure tasks, which destroy student-counselor relationships.

Counselors should attempt to provide information, not in violation of confidences, which will give evidence of accomplishment and enable administrators to gain adequate support for guidance and counseling activities.

Pupil Personnel Services and Other: Services available within buildings, school systems, and communities vary, as do counselor relationships with them, in different locales.

Coordinating and supervisory personnel should be responsible for periodic orientations of school counselors and for written definitions and/or instructions concerning availability, functions, and procedures of the various services. Once prescribed, counselors should be responsible for appropriate utilization of authorized services.

Relationship Priorities: Many and various relationships are important in enabling school counselors to help students.

However, counselors should not be drawn off into the demands of maintaining working relationships with colleagues to such an extent that they neglect their primary functions. For example, although counselors are expected to provide consultation to other staff members, they should not allow their time and energies to be consumed in this activity to such an extent that they no longer work directly with students (unless, of course, consultation is defined in their work setting as their primary function).

Load

The Education Task Force of the 1971 White House Conference on Youth recommended that counselors should "be available in sufficient numbers to work with all students throughout elementary and secondary schools (one counselor to 50 students)."

This recommendation is realistic in terms of what is needed to deal with the genuine concerns of students and to attempt to compensate for the decreasing number of interested and adequate parents in America. In terms of what should reasonably be expected to find financial support, counselor-student ratios are suggested of one to 200 and upwards.

However, it is idle to debate questions of ratio because they are relatively meaningless without statements of actual assignments of duties and recognition of the settings in which counselors work.

The Education Task Force of the 1971 White House Conference on Youth also recommended that counselors should "be freed of quasi-administrative, clerical, and disciplinary duties which prevent them from attending to the real interests and needs of students."

Factors to be considered, in addition to counselor-student ratio, when attempting to arrive at realistic appraisals of work loads include the severity of the problems being experienced by the students, the special needs of the student population, the clerical help available, the efficiency of the school staff in solving rather than creating problems, the curriculum and options available, the support personnel available for referrals from the counselors, the extent of testing responsibilities, the methods and personnel employed in coordinating the guidance and counseling program, the degree to which media has been developed and/or utilized to assist in orientation, guidance, and overlapping administrative functions the counselors may have been assigned, the degree to which the school is enabled to function as a cooperating therapeutic community rather than a frustrating, ineffectual confinement which breeds evasion, violence, and contempt, and the actual expectations of all concerned.

"Generalist" or "Specialist?"

Questions arise as to whether school counselors should be considered to be generalists or specialists, throughout their training and their practice in the schools.

As ***generalists,*** they are drawn into such an endless array of related activities that they risk being ineffectually expended. It is argued that counselors should guard against attempting to be "all things to all people."

On the other hand, restricting themselves as ***specialists,*** they can delimit their activities, relationships, and understandings to such an extent that they must be dependent upon others for things that they could more efficiently accomplish with continued freedom of movement and wide recognition of expertise.

In practice, counselors should be considered specialists in that they specialize in helping individual students through counseling relationships. They should not be drawn off into other responsibilities to such an extent that they are unable to perform their primary functions. Yet, the wide variety of concerns brought by students to the counseling relationship is so extensive that counselors must be generalists in order to be competent in providing genuine assistance.

School counselors are specialists in the sense that their roles differ from those of teachers and administrators. The basic needs of students demand far more than can be provided by busy teachers and administrators, in terms of time available, energy reserves, the training necessary to adequately assist, and the expectations of the authoritarian roles to which they are assigned. School counselors are generalists in that they should be capable and active in many areas.

Generalist-specialist arguments are relatively unproductive. More important, counselors should have realistic assignments, based on the substantiated needs of the students, and should have enabling support in functioning in a professional counseling role.

Emphasis on Individual or Group Procedures?

Inclinations of school counselors differ, with some stressing individual counseling and some, group activities in assisting students.

Both approaches should be seen as necessary and appropriate in answering the needs of students.

The unique and personal nature of many student concerns requires one-to-one attention, but it is foolish to suppose that counselors might be limited to this approach. Many activities within their areas of responsibility may effectively be accomplished through less-costly group guidance and/or group counseling. General orientations, preliminary activities in educational and career planning, completion of forms, group testing, tours, and developmental guidance discussions are common examples of counselor-conducted group activities.

In attempting to utilize the limited time and energies of school counselors, group procedures should be further developed and expanded—not as attempted substitutes for needed individual counseling but as efficient procedures that make more time available for individual counseling.

Media

Similar to the importance of group procedures in completing the excessive work that must be done, there continues the need for the development of practical audio-visual materials which assist in the accomplishment of the work of counselors.

Without adequate media support, students who miss counselor-presented orientations—in such areas as career planning and as registration for the coming school year—are unlikely to receive the same basic information and message. Systems are called for which can be used on a group basis and, later, be used to insure that all students who missed the group presentation (absentees, transfers . . .) are given the same facts, motivations, and opportunities.

Such tools as locally developed automatic-advance, sound filmstrips, with both projectors and small-screen viewers, for example, can take care of preliminary and follow-up information-giving, do this in a more effective manner than the lecture method, free counselors to do other things, and make it possible for counselors to work at higher levels of competency.

Also, the use of printed matter (literature and stories, as well as resource material on colleges, careers, living . . .), computers, and television should be further developed and integrated into information-giving and counseling activities.

"Seeing All Students"?

Controversy is bound to arise whenever counselors are required to "see all students at least once or twice a year," assuming the inference is that they be seen individually.

If the White House Conference recommendation of one counselor for every 50 students was followed, such a requirement would be feasible. With typical ratios and with typical expectations of additional duties, it tends to place a severe restriction on the effectiveness of counselors in genuinely helping students who need more than an arbitrarily allotted share of the time available.

A disproportionate amount of individual counseling time must necessarily go to students experiencing difficulties related to failure, violence, drugs, sexual abuse, family disruption, transition, and/or other demanding problem areas. Counselors must not be put in the position of having to refuse the giving of urgently needed help because of directives to converse, individually, with each and every student.

School counselors should, however, conduct and/or coordinate an ongoing program with all students, intended to meet their guidance and counseling needs to the greatest extent possible, considering the time and resources available.

Group methods must be used to deal with much of the work. Media should be developed and utilized.

While counselors may not "*see*" all students as frequently as they desire, their school's guidance and counseling programs should be designed to *help* all students—through group methods and through the indirect impact of the assistance provided the many students who request or are referred for individual counseling.

Counselor Role in Enabling Change

Should counselors be seen as "agents of change" or as "guardians of established stability"?

Either stereotype is misleading.

School counselors have the obligation to make positive change possible and more probable in their counselees' attitudes, plans, and aspirations—through providing nonthreatening opportunities for realistic understanding.

They have the obligation to attempt to stimulate positive change within the immediate and future environment of the students with whom they work. They request correction of oversights and errors. They recommend individual program changes when these are judged necessary to the well-being of students. They support needed revisions of curriculum and utilize alternative courses and training opportunities.

In general, school counselors are obligated to participate in productive change as a necessary aspect of normal living.

This obligation should *not* be extended to require counselors to be *ombudsmen* or student advocates in the sense that they expend themselves in representing the students' voices in their striving to "get what they want." Counselors should provide opportunities for students to think things through and reach intelligent decisions. If students see counselors as simply power-based people to use in attaining what they initially desire, counselors lose their effectiveness as counselors, and the students become further locked into less fulfilling patterns of behavior, using intelligence to develop defensive rationalizations rather than to seek better ways.

Also, the obligation to be concerned with change should not be extended to require counselors to become disproportionately involved in the alteration of curriculum. While many counselors may be amply qualified to be curriculum specialists, and while there is a continuing need for such specialists, counselors should rely on others in such consuming administrative leadership functions. Counselors are obliged to make written and, sometimes, repeated recommendations as they view the needs of students, but they should avoid assuming administrative roles in attempting change in curriculum.

Counselors should guard against being drawn into power-to-change functions if their role is to be preserved, a role which stimulates and brings constructive form to significant change in the citizens of tomorrow.

Career Education

Career Education is a meaningful, practical, motivational approach to education. It is not a guidance program. It should be an integrated part of all the programs of the school.

Counselors may or may not be key members of the staff in it's development.

Effective career education requires, first of all, that the school offerings have purpose and be relevant and, then, that students be brought to see this purpose and relevancy in their own lives. School counselors share the latter responsibilities with teachers.

In any event, counselors are and will continue to be actively involved in career education, whether or not the schools in which they are employed are fully utilizing this approach.

School counseling is goal oriented.

School counselors strive to help all students choose realistic career goals and develop sound plans to reach these goals. They attempt to stimulate interest in career education among teachers and administrators and to support the career education activities of others in concerted efforts to provide for the genuine needs of students.

Whenever it is within the scope of their assignments, they attempt to assist students during the transition between training and actual employment.

Value Formation

Attempts within education to help students understand and deal constructively with real-life experiences are significant concerns of school counselors. The facilitation of affective development should be a continuing concern of all educators. The felt needs of students, their goals, values, awarenesses, relationships, conflicts—all should be recognized as inseparable from every aspect of education.

In particular, there should be no question of whether or not counselors are involved in value formation.

Teachers, administrators, parents, peers, super-star entertainers, the media, and more are involved in value formation. To suggest that school counselors, who work with students in confidential settings and assist them in their moments of decision, are not also involved is hollow deception.

School counselors must be relatively accepting of a wide variety of political, religious, economic, and moral values in students. They cannot function as counselors if they are not aware that values are ever present, influencing the behaviors and the decisions of the students.

When a counselee is apparently dominated by unproductive and destructive values, the counselor owes it to him/her to offer alternative points of view for consideration, which may, if the counselee chooses, assist in movement toward more satisfying, productive outcomes.

A counselor who is confronted by a student who asserts he/she wishes to be a robber, for example, should not be expected to simply accept this goal as valid and attempt to help the student prepare for a career of crime in the most effective manner possible.

Student Discipline

The counselor's role in the area of discipline problems must be recognized to be different from those of teachers and administrators. While counselors do not condone disruption in the classroom, they do not serve as authority-figure disciplinarians.

They do not try to "fix" students. They try to help them.

Through their counseling functions, they diminish frustration and foster positive-goal-directed activity which may be expected to decrease the extent and severity of disruptive behavior.

Counselors understand the importance of students learning that there are consequences for the violation of rules of order. They also understand that punishment and suppression are not long-range solutions.

In working with students who may be viewed by teachers as "discipline problems," counselors are accepting of these students as worthy individuals and of their points of view. However, in due time, they attempt to offer valid options of more productive and maturely rewarding behavior.

Counselors attempt to help students accept the normalcy of their feelings and to help them discover constructive outlets. They attempt to guide them to courses and other school activities where they may experience success and satisfaction. They attempt to help students to discover realistic goals and bring direction to their lives and purpose to their school work.

Counselors assist students in their strivings to control behaviors which lead to additional frustration and, in turn, to more acts of aggression.

They consult with teachers in their mutual efforts to cope with and head off disciplinary problems. However, they realize that if they are to be effective, they must guard against being too closely identified with authority figures against whom the offending students have erected rejecting prejudgments and rationalized defenses.

Confidentiality

It is necessary that school counselors be enabled to provide confidential settings so that they may form relationships which allow and encourage counselees to discuss their situations and concerns realistically. Policies, record systems, physical facilities, and procedures should be such as to make this possible.

The circumstances which may ethically or legally require school counselors to disclose information gained from counseling relationships should be made known to counselees whenever it appears that content may approach these circumstances. That is, when it looks like a counselee might discuss something the counselor cannot keep secret, the counselor should define what can be kept secret and what cannot . . .

School counselors having questions on this subject should review the ASCA Position Paper, "Principles of Confidentiality," available from ASCA . . .

Drug Abuse

School counselors view drug abuse as occurring amongst a wide variety of students, from different backgrounds and in different settings. They recognize that the reasons for participation in drug abuse activities and/or the drug subculture are societal and personal in nature and are often compensatory and/or escapist in purpose.

Counselors understand that little is accomplished through in-office decisions to "give up bad habits" and return to the void. Within the limitations of the time and opportunities available, school counselors attempt to help students gain self-understanding, satisfying relationships, success in school, realistic expectations, and sound plans for productive fulfillment in the future.

The primary focus in working with those who have had or may have drug-induced experiences is the individual—his/her concerns, present and future—and not the use of drugs.

Whenever it appears that drug use may be discussed in the course of counseling, counselors should clarify whatever legal and/or ethical requirements may exist that might cause the counselor to share information with others. If total confidentiality does not exist, counselees should not be misled to believe that it does.

Actual drug ingestion is not a prerequisite for counselors who work with students whose concerns are associated with drug use. It is important that school counselors do not underestimate their own expertise in helping students in areas that are usually basic in striving toward solutions to the symptomatic participation in drug abuse activities.

Counselors should facilitate referrals to school nurses or others authorized to provide medical attention whenever it is suspected that this may be needed.

College Admission, Financial Aid, and Employment Applications

School counselors should not complete endorsement sections of college entrance applications. They should not make recommendations favoring or disfavoring approval for financial aid or for employment.

They may assist students in completing their forms and provide information concerning college admissions, financial aids, and applications for employment. However, counselors must not be seen as people who must be manipulated in order to gain admissions, financial aids, and/or employment.

Counselors should be counselors—understanding professionals with whom students can confide, be themselves, and find acceptance regardless of their feelings and shortcomings, which would tend to be concealed if counselors were people who had to be impressed so that they would provide needed recommendations.

Goals and Objectives

As the processes of counseling with individual students should be goal-directed, the total program of school guidance and counseling should be, as well. Yet, confusion as to what goals should be pursued sometimes results from the varied emphases of different writings and from contrasting points of view.

A review of the opening assertion of this paper suggests the goals of school counseling to be

1. To assist students to cope with a wide variety of chronic and acute life problems which commonly hinder learning in schools,
2. To assist students to find valid purpose and rewarding direction in their lives,
3. To prompt individual planning and preparation for the achievement of realistic goals,
4. To assist students to avail themselves of the personal and economic opportunities of our increasingly complex society, and
5. To enable success—the success of individual students, the success of schools in meeting the educational needs of people, and the success of our government in the continuation of a free and productive America.

Beyond this general statement of goals, specific job descriptions should be developed, as suggested by the 1971 White House Conference on Youth, defined at the local level with *participation from the students* to be served, their parents, school administrators, school board members, and the counselors." These should be such that the completion of the tasks described may be considered to be the objectives of the program and will do much in achieving the general goals suggested above.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Professional Preparation

1. With the goal of bringing together the best of what theorists, trainers, and practicing school counselors

have to offer, it is recommended that more practicing school counselors of recognized expertise be engaged, periodically, in teaching guidance and counseling courses at the college level and that more college instructors be engaged, periodically, in full-time, year-long experiences as school counselors (not as consultants but as counselors with full school counseling loads).

Exchange programs should be established in which counselors and counselor trainers exchange jobs for one-year periods, with arrangements made so that their original positions would be guaranteed and with an appropriate allowance for moving expense, any increase in living costs, and maintenance of equitable salary.

2. The training of school counselors should be more in concert with the training of school administrators. There should be at least one course where counselors and administrators are required to develop practical guidance and counseling programs together, working in pairs of one counselor and one administrator.

3. The training of school counselors should be expanded to include organization of realistic work loads with emphasis on the efficient use and full utilization of secretarial, clerical, and paraprofessional assistance.

4. Administrators should be trained in an appreciation of the validity, economy, and efficiency of counselors being provided adequate clerical and paraprofessional assistance.

5. Practical media assistance should be developed in support of school counseling functions, and counselors should receive training, including a practical internship, in the use of audio-visual aids and books in their work and in the advantages

of an overlapping of the counseling center and the media center (or library) in the physical facilities of the school.

6. Training should include workshops in sound, unpretentious accountability systems which routinely document the accomplishments of school counselors.

Legislative and Governmental

1. Any legislation related to counselor activity which will require the completion of reports, clerical tasks, and/or additional counseling efforts should make specific provision for the funding of additional clerical and/or counseling assistance to accomplish the tasks. When and if this is neglected, the work of counselors is undermined, and the legislation tends to be self-defeating.

2. Legislation should not assume that counselors have power to substantially change their role on their own. Institutes intended to alter counseling and guidance programs should be attended by both counselors and their supervising administrators with them working out plans to accomplish authorized, specific funded missions together. If institutes are funded, monies should not be awarded unless there is evidence of, or contractual agreement that there will be, implementation of agreed upon procedures.

3. Legislation making reference to guidance and counseling programs should realistically recognize functions of these programs and should not allude to them in any way that might suggest they are "ancillary" or "subordinate."

4. Same as #1 under "Professional Preparation."

From: *The Status of Guidance and Counseling in the Nation's Schools. A Series of Issue Papers.* Washington, D. C.: APGA, 1978.

The summary report: Herr, Edwin L. *Guidance and Counseling in the Schools, Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future.* Washington, D. C.: APGA, 1979.

These and the most current position papers of the American School Counselor Association are available from AACD, 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304.

As of this printing, the most recent school counselor role statement was adopted in July 1990 and appears in the December 1990 issue of *The ASCA Counselor*, the newsletter of the Association.

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPATION IN THE PROFESSION

A National Depository for Background Information and Writings of National Professional Leaders in Guidance and Counseling is maintained at Western Kentucky University. The following, related to my years on the Governing Board of the American School Counselor Association, is from a published collection of writings through this source. Put down just six years after I had been ASCA's president, it is offered as a glimpse of the governance of the profession.

RECOLLECTIONS

I have never believed that a medical doctor should have to be a director of a hospital or a trainer of doctors to be considered a significant professional.

To my way of thinking, if there is truly a profession of school counselors and school counseling, working with the youngsters is where it is at. I continue as a practicing school counselor, in spite of local setbacks and a general lack of commitment to professional associations in the relative isolation of my locale.

The professional lethargy of most who carry the name of counselor in Montana is almost contagious after the years of rebellion and mutual distrust I knew amongst the enthusiastic, brilliant leaders of the helping professions. Yet, I respected them all—most, the even thinkers, who could patiently put it all together . . . but also, the militants, of whom some were courageous builders . . . some, noisy destructors, in it simply for the action and the social booze . . . some, exploiters, more interested in developing personal careers than in working together toward a better world.

After Washington meetings during the late 60s, we were bedded in the relative opulence of the Dupont Plaza, and one fell asleep to the sound of African drums from Dupont

Circle, just outside. . . . One evening (the picture comes), I recall standing near those drums when, crowd parting, a young man strode through and on, jaw set, an open slash across his muscular chest, trousers red, wet-soaked with blood. A hundred followed. A hundred more when he passed back through again. Unsuccessfully, police tried to get him to go to the ambulance waiting that second time on his line of march. . . . All cool. . . . And the drums beat on. . . .

More than at any other hotel, I tried to stay at the Harrington when in Washington. This cost considerably less than the hotels more commonly frequented by association leaders but was a good deal farther from APGA headquarters. [APGA, the parent association which services the American School Counselor Association and a number of other associations, including ACES, for counselor educators and supervisors, has since changed its name to the American Association for Counseling and Development, AACD.] When time permitted, I walked and had the memorable experience of watching the people of Washington come more and more into the streets at night. They and I felt safer with the numbers.

It never set well with me to discuss the plight of our disadvantaged lot all day and then to eat rich food in fine restaurants and stay in the best hotels. Evenings, whenever this was off time, I most enjoyed the people, not just my colleagues, but those I might engage in conversation in a downtown cafeteria or at the Smithsonian. . . . A non-drinker, I never found the bar as a place to relax. . . .

I regret the taboos, although some are quite purposeful, I must accept. A handsome Black lady comes to mind, across from the Hilton as I walked by late one night, who asked to keep me company, in a tone that seemed to say she sensed that I was as lonely and depressed as I was. Deceptive, perhaps, but I would have liked to have known her (not Biblically, you understand).

And what has all this to do with being a professional leader, all this talk about drums and blood at Dupont Circle, and being lonely late at night in Washington? Far more than can be supposed, until you are there.

The greatest discovery to me in experiencing national leadership is that all of those involved—we—are very human, fallible people, acting imperfectly, dominated by all the stresses and limiting influences we see in our counselees.

Without condemnation, with considerable praise for the most part, let me simply assert, our leaders deserve support and guidance, and not reverence and impossible expectations.

Just one more emotional recollection. I recall arriving in Detroit one Thursday evening and, as was my practice in any city with a few hours free, taking off my tie and going for a long walk, out from the Statler Hilton, across Grand Circus Park, and on. It was strangely like a dream, with people locking their shops, police ordering citizens off the street, but no one seeming to take note of me. . . . An hour later, back in the hotel, I learned that Martin Luther King had been shot. . . . The next evening the ASCA Board was the only group being served in the entire hotel, and we by the head of the commissary department. There were chains across the doors leading to the streets. We had phone contact with Washington, hearing there were flames only blocks from APGA headquarters. The president-elect of ASCA, having brought his family with him to Detroit, quite reasonably resigned his office and took his family back home. On my motion, as a member-at-large of the Board, Don Hays was appointed president-elect. . . . Throughout the convention marshal law prevailed, with no one but military personnel permitted on the streets after dusk.

These were impactful times.

The following year, at the Las Vegas convention of 1969, as President-elect-elect of ASCA, I attended my first APGA Board meeting. I was appalled when a school counseling concern was brought up at this meeting and the ASCA President was relatively ignored in its consideration. At ASCA Board meetings each member had recognized responsibilities and was promptly called on and expected to have answers whenever considerations fell within his/her area. At the APGA Board meeting, Don Hays, the member primarily responsible to speak for school counselors was obliviously snubbed.

At an ASCA Board meeting soon after, we were considering the newly proposed dues structure. I related what I had seen and suggested ASCA call for an even distribution of dues, with half going to APGA and half going to ASCA. It was not expected that this would come to be. It was an attempt to say, "Look. We respect APGA and our illustrious counselor trainers. We believe what you have taught us about the dignity of the individual. We believe that there ought to be mutual respect amongst colleagues. We see you as important. See us as important, as well." My ASCA colleagues pursued the thought, many of whom felt even more strongly about related issues than did I. An ASCA Commission was created which eventually recommended that ASCA withdraw from APGA. Out of this an APGA Commission was created to consider and revise APGA structure, which indeed it did.

In 1970 the membership was polled at the request of the ASCA Delegate Assembly. The results of the poll did not favor withdrawal from APGA. However, so few responded that it appeared the membership was undecided. By one single vote, the Governing Board decided ASCA would remain with APGA. This tie-breaking vote was cast by President-elect Thelma Daley, to whom I had passed the gavel in order to speak against withdrawal.

Even though ASCA did not move to NEA, as recommended by the ASCA Commission, it was apparent that there was a national need for a counselors' group within NEA and with minimal friction this group was formed with some overlapping of ASCA's and the new NASC's leadership.

All of this and more was extremely time-consuming. Feelings in all quarters ran high. Communications were a constant challenge.

I was indeed fortunate to have served as Board liaison with the ASCA Publications Committee before being elected President-elect and had studied, refined, and written our publications policies and procedures. In the course of this, I had noted that our newsletter was being processed in Washington much like our journals and was always months behind. This we changed, and with Editor Louine Hickman

Holt in charge, the *ASCA Newsletter* became based in Salt Lake City and functioned with commendable efficiency throughout those years. This and the presidential newsletter going to a few hundred key people from my home in Billings helped to minimize misunderstandings and to encourage positive action.

I have regretted that my efforts were so consumed by the imperatives of that time. Other things might have been more productive.

I wish I had been free to develop greater interest in and utilization of media, for example. In my last year on the Board, I was attempting to lay plans with AASL and prominent media producers for a meeting of school media specialists and counselors to brainstorm and suggest procedures, facilities, and materials which could more substantially support and supplement the work of counselors. Regrettably, I was blocked in this, and it never happened.

Related to media interests, I carried a Leica and a recorder in my briefcase. Louine usually had a half dozen pictures for every one she found room to print. And as for the recorder, I had in mind to share some of the high points of my term, once complete. But more important, I found that I had accumulated over forty hours of on-scene material on drug counseling. This being the high priority of the day, I set to work that summer of 1971 to edit the best down to an hour and a half. Copies were sent out to every state to stimulate thought and discussion . . .

There are many ways we could be utilizing media to a greater extent, both in supporting our counseling and in accomplishing tasks which keep us from counseling.

In my own work, for example, I have produced three automatic-advance, audio-visual presentations for local use. The first two are time-saving filmstrips to assist us in registering students on a group basis and following up on an individual basis, accountably picking up all absentees and transfers. The third is in slide form—one hundred and sixty frames, thirty-three minutes, titled, "Developing Your High School

Plan," with pictures providing incidental evidence of compliance with Title IX concerns. The latter provides rationale for planning and actually guides students through the initial steps of completing our high school plan worksheet.

I wish ASCA was turning out such needed tools for the practicing counselor in the field. But I well know, there is much to do.

Let me share just one more presidential action related to media which comes to mind as providing a distinct pleasure.

To appreciate this you must understand something of our accounting system: when publications are produced by the association for sale to members or others it does not show up as an expense in the records until they are actually sold. An amount of cash assets merely is converted to inventory assets on our statements. Then, as leaflets or whatever are sold, the cost of printing the quantity sold shows up as an expense and the price charged the buyer shows up as income. If we ever throw anything away, then the initial cost shows up as an expense, and, of course, without the profit-making income.

In my year as President, we were very close on funds. No president likes to have it appear that he/she is spending too much money.

With this background, you can empathize with my position when I discovered a key leaflet, "Meet Your Secondary School Counselor," badly out-of-date, still being sold to the field, with a stock of over 15,000 still on the shelves.

With a joy to be shared with all of you out there who ever ordered out-dated junk that you could not use, I initiated a new heading in the Single Publications expense statement, "Destruction of Out-Dated Publications," with an entry of $605, and the leaflets were discarded, with a revision underway.

Of course, this, like all actions, was taken with the help of others. A president's term is the work of many, many people. In no way can I do them justice in these brief comments Yet, do allow me to say, simply, most sincerely, "Thank you." . . .

Let it suffice to note . . . there is no end to the things still to be done with the youngsters.

In our profession we continue to work always at the beginning.

[From *Presidential Reporting—Echoes Abound from APGA Leaders* (1978), a collection of writings complied by Vernon Lee Sheeley, published by the Department of Educational Leadership, Western Kentucky University at Bowling Green.]

APPENDIX C

"DEVELOPING YOUR HIGH SCHOOL PLAN" (MEDIA TOOL EXAMPLE, FOR GROUP WORK)

When it comes to getting career and education information to the kids, a counselor's orientation cannot be functional without a familiarity with media—*computer programs, video, films and filmstrips, automatic-advance sound slide sets, overhead projector transparencies, books, references, and college and training school catalogues—revised and updated.*

Attempting to provide a fair sampling of the many programs, presentations, and media tools available, is beyond the scope of this book, of course.

Suggesting both process and content, however, let me share an example with you, through an abbreviated script. It is for one of the automatic-advance slide sets I have produced for use with students starting a career unit in preparation for signing up for their first semester of high school.

The slide format was chosen over video or filmstrip for this one because of the greater ease in revising each year to match changes in course offerings, graduation requirements, etc. Also, the printed detail is projected more sharply with slides than with video. (However, with advanced technology, the basic script may well be adapted to video and/or computer.)

The half-hour presentation minimizes the wear and tear on the counselor, required to make the same presentation over and over to group after group. With many of the basics covered, halfway through the hour, the counselor comes on to add emphasis, provide clarifications, and carry the action forward.

With such tools all groups in the school and even in the school district, receive the same core of information. In the follow-up, students who are absent on the days of group presentations can receive this basic information on their return and get started on the activity, using an automatic-advance rear-screen projector. Students transferring in later in the year, also, can be provided this same orientation with a degree of accountability.

Lacking here, are the pictures. Be assured that where there are shots of students typing, working on engines, cooking, welding, or whatever, there are both boys and girls, side by side, and a variety of ethnic origins present.

The media is the message, and while the words speak little of equal opportunities, the pictures shout.

(For those interested in process, let me share, the script comes first. Then, a stack of 6 by 8 cards are prepared, one for each picture to be taken, headed with the sequence number and with the words that will be said while the picture is on the screen. Picture ideas to match the words are jotted on the cards as a guide to the shooting . . . The following was first done with two trays of 80 slides each but has been revised to one tray of 140 slides . . .)

Each student with a ready worksheet and pencil, the lights dim, and—

1. DEVELOPING YOUR HIGH SCHOOL PLAN.
2. High school can be a lot of different things, you know?
3. What are you looking forward to?
4. What do you expect to accomplish in your high school years?
5. If you do not have an answer, a number of them, you are not likely to be successful. How can you expect to succeed if you don't even know what you are trying to do?
6. How can you expect to arrive where you want to be, if you don't know where you want to go? (Picture of dead-end street sign)

7. Certainly, you should not try to be too specific in this rapidly changing world. But you should have some general idea of what you want to have accomplished by the time you graduate from high school.

8. And you should develop some reasonable plans as to how to reach these goals.

9. What do you want out of high school? "Well, I want to have some fun." (student's voice)

10. Most people look forward to having fun. And fun you ought to have.

11. What happens during your high school years has very much to do with fun. Not just with fun for the moment, but with fun for the rest of you life. (Picture of smiling girl working at drafting table)

12. Some throw away their chances for fun and a full life for a few senseless kicks during their teens. (Picture of a bottle and a joint in a fancy tray)

13. At times this tendency toward reckless kicks comes from a need to cover up the depression people feel when life seems empty. When there isn't any real purpose. No point in trying. (Picture of elbows through bars at juvenile section of local jail)

14. The drive for kicks often stems from lack of purpose. And lack of purpose breeds the preoccupation with kicks. It's a deadly, locked-in circle.

15. For some, the future seems confused and overwhelming. So they try to look for some other way, instead of facing up, getting organized and heading for happier, more productive lives.

16. What is happiness? What is fun anyway? (Picture of a mass of gleeful students after a touchdown)

17. Well, happiness, or an indispensable part of it, is discovering a career. For most people, happiness is made possible by having a job—

18. Something they like to do, something they can do well.

19. Something which enables them to support themselves and to contribute substantially to the support of their families and their community.

20. This is true of both women and men, married or unmarried.

21. In this modern age, it must be recognized that family life can be complicated, indeed, and deserves more preparation and training than usually received.

22. And most people who marry cannot count on marriage and family life as being their one and only career.

23. Most people who marry will not only want to work outside the home, at one time or another, they will have to. The divorce rate is high. Accidents happen. Emergencies arise.

24. In this world of change, no one can afford to neglect becoming trained to earn a living.

25. And no high school student should be allowed to waste our present and future resources by evading the learning of productive skills.

26. Our preparation as contributing members of society is a responsibility shared by all of us.

27. But, of course, career preparation is only part of it, only part of why you should be planning your high school years with care. Happiness is more than just a good job and the ability to be successful at it.

28. Happiness is a lot of other things. A lot of different things to a lot of different people.

29. With any luck, you are going to have a good deal of leisure time. What are you going to do with it?

30. School has some answers here. School can do more than help you prepare for earning a living. It can help you prepare to get more out of your leisure time, as well. (Picture of at-risk student reading)

31. How about art? Do you like art? "I'm not good at art. I can't draw. I kind of like it though." (Boy's voice)

32. Maybe if you took art, you could learn. Of course, art is a lot more than drawing. What do you plan to go into after high school?

33. "I'm going to be a teacher, an elementary teacher." (Picture of a teacher working closely with his fifth-graders)

34. Most elementary teachers teach art. And you would be required to take some in college.

35. Of course, for those who enjoy art, or think they might, art is an area that might turn out to be a career in itself.

36. There are many courses and activities in high school which are significant in providing you with enrichment and background that make for happier, more fulfilling lives.

37. Sometimes related directly to careers, sometimes not, but nonetheless important to you in becoming the sort of knowledgeable, in-depth person you may wish to become. Literature, art, music, family living, foreign languages, history, math, shop, journalism . . .

38. The problem for many students is just how to work in all the many worthwhile subjects and activities they would truly like to take.

39. Let's turn our attention to you and to your own individual situation. (Picture: blank black nothing on screen)

40. It's such a vast, vast world. In developing a high school plan, where do you begin? (Picture of galaxy painting from NASA)

41. A good place to start is with a goal off there in the distance, with at least a guess at what occupations or careers you think might interest you most. (Picture from above the clouds, with peak pushing through in the distance)

42. Suppose you might like to go into sales. Suppose you might like to be fully employed as a salesperson as soon as possible after you graduate, and perhaps employed part-time as a salesperson while still in high school.

43. The one course you would want to be sure to take is Sales, entered here on a high school plan worksheet as planned for the junior year. (Close-up of worksheet, the first of a series, as a plan is developed a step at a time)

* * *

60. So there it is, a course plan completed for the moment. An expression of thoughts and choices at a given point in time.

61. Let's move on now to another example. In sales, college is not a requirement. It might help, but it is not required. Let's take a goal now where it definitely is required.

62. Here's a worksheet started by someone who is thinking of being a dentist or a medical doctor . . .

NOTE: And after this, preparations are considered for engineering, and for careers requiring further training beyond high school but not college, introducing the vo-tech opportunities. The specifics of graduation requirements are reviewed, with questions and answers. Then an up girl's voice provides a break from mine for the next dozen frames.

78. "What I have always wanted to be is a veterinarian. I like animals. You know, dogs and cats and horses and more. My aunt has a pet pig . . . I made my mind up when I was six that I was going to be a vet'. (Picture of woman veterinarian with a dog on the operating table)

79. "But in 7th Grade, where most kids liked Life Science, I didn't. And in the 8th Grade, I questioned signing up for Biology because I didn't like Life Science. But my counselor said it would be a good exploration, that it was one of the courses I should be taking if I wanted to be a vet'.

80. "I went ahead and took it, and I worked out a high school course plan that would get me ready for the pre-vet' work in college and the heavy competition of getting into a veterinarian school after the pre-vet'.

81. "But now, I don't like Biology. Not as much as most. Taking more of it has no appeal for me whatsoever. And thinking more on what a veterinarian really does, as I worked up a career exploration project in class, I can see that I don't want to be a vet' after all.

82. "I like animals, and I will always have a few animals around to enjoy, as pets, not as patients. One idea that really struck hard when I thought about it was how it would be to have to operate on an animal. And that's not for me.

83. "But what is for me? My counselor asked me what I liked best in school when we were thinking about it the last time I was in.

84. "I told him, 'Shop.' And that's a fact. I had put this idea down on my worksheet last year. I remember I had repaired our vacuum cleaner at home about that time last year. And my counselor asked if I might like to take Shop as an elective, which I did.

85. "And now, I am looking at a variety of courses I hadn't thought much about before. The mechanical course at the Career Center looks good to me.

86. "Or Electronics . . . I don't know . . . I like art . . .

87. "And I am considering the idea of going on to college in some field of *engineering*, if I can cut the math. I am doing all right in Algebra . . . Earning a B anyway. I'm starting to push myself for an A.

88. "In working out a plan, I concluded I had better get with it if I was thinking about going to college in a challenging field like engineering. In both pre-vet' and engineering, I have been advised to take math all four years in high school, starting with Algebra.

89. "I'm still not at all certain about what I want to do ten years from now or what courses I will want to take later on in high school. But I'm thinking. And at least I am past telling people I am going to be something I dreamt up when I was a six-year-old simply because I like animals."

90. Jeanne's worksheet shows a variety of ideas and alternatives. Many of her decisions can best be made after further investigations and after sampling courses later on in high school.

91. A high school plan is not forever. And it is not like signing up for anything. It's getting your thoughts down on paper, and it's thinking things over in an organized fashion—by yourself, with your counselor, and with your folks at home.

92. So let's give it a whirl. With this commonly used plan worksheet let's take it from the top.

93. First, enter the name of the high school you plan to attend. (The worksheet being completed in the pictures on the screen is the same form as the one the students are using.)

94. If you plan to attend a school other than one of those in this school district, you will want to make direct contact with that school concerning course offerings.

95. And now enter the number of your class in school—that is, the year you plan to graduate.

96. Next, your name, and the date.

97. Then, put down your career goal, if you have one. And, also, put down one or two alternatives. If you have no career goals, simply list a few careers in which you are interested.

98. If you can think of nothing that seems of interest, put down whatever seems most appropriate in your case at this point in time.

99. Now indicate what you plan to do after graduation from high school. Even for those who have no idea of career goals, there should be general ideas about what they plan to do after they graduate from high school, and these have much to do with the sort of high school courses that should be planned.

100. Do you plan to attend a college or university? If so, do you plan to attend a school in this state?

101. Or do you plan to attend a college or university out-of-state?

NOTE: The remaining frames continue to lead students through the initial steps, up to the point where they may be expected to need individualized help, then closes with the following.

128. You will be testing and revising your plan as you go along. As said before, plans aren't forever. Be willing to make changes in the light of what you learn about your world and about yourself. Plans are beginnings.

129. And those who have thought enough to make plans are started, started toward happier, more successful lives,

130. With the contributing, productive life-styles so vitally important to the future of our country.

131. One last thing, in regard to your plan worksheet. Most worksheets have a place near the bottom for one of your parents to sign. A parent's signature on this form does not mean agreement or contractual approval, of course.

132. It merely indicates that your parents have seen your plan and had an opportunity to discuss it with you.

133. Parents have a significant part to play in most plans, sometimes involving a substantial financial contribution which may or may not be possible.

134. The opportunities for fun and success in high school are many.

135. Be an active participant.

136. The more you put in, the more you get out.

137. What you learn and discover these next few years will be very significant in times to come.

138. Is high school going to be what you want it to be?

139. To a very great extent, it's up to you.

140. What's your plan?

APPENDIX D

COUNSELOR'S FUNCTIONAL ORIENTATION WORKSHEET

As counselors and/or counselors in training ***look ahead*** to the accelerated development of more adequate functional orientations, individually or in workshops, a jogging worksheet may be of possible use.

However, I am inclined to caution against restricting thought or guiding too closely. Worksheets should be open-ended so that any heading could prompt users to enter merely a few key words or to be expansive and clip on additional pages.

The form suggested here is meant to be very tentative, indeed.

As an introduction for the worksheet, let me borrow from the introduction of this book:

Our purpose is to stimulate reactive thought on what ought to be, in the development of the ***functional orientations*** necessary when counseling in the real world.

Even the best of theory does not accomplish much until it becomes integrated with happenings and circumstances; that is, until it is seen as providing rescuing conceptualizations, consistent with experience, in viewing the tasks at hand.

Reaffirm and use that which you find to be sound. Reject with added insight all that you do not.

At the very least, a worksheet prompts questions of what should make up adequate orientations with which to function professionally.

FUNCTIONAL ORIENTATION WORKSHEET

Area of counselor function: ____________________

Do you have assigned responsibility in this area? __________

Is this an area related to professional counselor role but without specific assignment? ____________________

Provide anecdotes of happenings in this area.

List key concepts that may be of use in enabling effective function as a counselor in this area.

Note concerns which enable, restrict, or prevent counseling function in this area:

Physical settings ____________________

Counselor load and time available ____________________

Attitudes—student counselee ____________________

Attitudes—counselee's peers ____________________

Attitudes—parents ____________________

Attitudes—administrators ____________________

Attitudes—counselor ____________________

List counselor competencies necessary to function in this area: ____________________

List background knowledge and/or experience necessary to function as a counselor in this area: ____________________

List references accelerating development in this area:

____

The following is an example of the sort of jottings, that might go down to record personal thought or to stimulate group discussion.

FUNCTIONAL ORIENTATION WORKSHEET

(Responses are shown in different type style.)

Area of counselor function: *Prejudice.*

Do you have assigned responsibility in this area? *No.*

Is this an area related to professional counselor role but without specific assignment? *Yes.*

Anecdotes of happenings in this area:

Jan, an eighth-grader, was the daughter of a mechanic and had significant aptitude, interest, and experience in working on cars. Still the principal refused to let her take shop classes. "If we let her, it will just lead to trouble. We'll just have a bunch of girls in there to fool around."

Happily, this was into the '70s, and pressures beyond my insistence enabled Jan to take the mechanical courses she wanted, successfully, throughout high school.

* * * * *

The streetcar lurched to a stop opposite the Emporium, and among those crowding aboard, two boys pushed by the fare box without paying.

"Come back and pay your fare," the motorman called after them.

"We paid. We paid," the boys answered.

"Come pay your fare," said the motorman over his shoulder.

The light changed, but the streetcar did not move. Finally, the boys appeared.

"We paid him," they yelled. "Prejudiced! Prejudiced! He's just prejudiced against us. Prejudiced."

"Boys," next to me, a lady whose skin was the same color as the boys' spoke up. "Why don't you stop bad-mouthing the man? Pay your money to ride like everybody else, or get off and walk."

They looked at each other, shrugged, and ran for the next car, just pulling up behind us.

* * * * *

Cindy closed the door firmly as she entered my office.

"I don't know how to say this. I don't want to seem prejudiced. But it's about Henry. He just thinks he can come up and hug you. You know, like a greeting in the morning, or whenever.

"I don't let any boys do that. I think he's just taking advantage of that love-everybody thing we are all supposed to be into. And, well, especially, if my dad ever saw him grab on to me the way he is doing. I don't want to think about it."

* * * * *

At the 1970 APGA Convention in New Orleans, a number of us were assigned to consolidate a mass of human rights resolutions for presentation to the APGA Senate, to cut down on duplication. With black members on one side of the table and white members on the other, I asked for a clarification of the term "non-white," which appeared in most of the resolutions we were considering.

I said, "My mother's name is Garcia. My stepfather is Filipino. And I have been told I am one-sixteenth Sioux. Now does that make me "non-white?"

"Why sure," came a response. "Now come over to our side of town, Baby, and you're one of us."

This broke the ice, and where there had been stony faces, there was laughter. And we moved ahead . . .

* * * * *

"Look out for those purples, whites, pinks, blacks, yellows, reds, tans, or whatever color you don't happen to be," I have said to the kids. "Then there are those of that other sex. And the ones with the unfamiliar attitude toward God and the nature of the universe. And those from that other neighborhood. You are better than they are, and all those things that are said about them have to be the way it is, you know?

"Or do you?

"Closer to the truth is that we hang a lot of stuff on each other that is not deserved, not earned. Then in righteous defense, the victims strike back and become the attackers. All sides get hurt. All rationalize with greater unfairness.

"Over and over, we are hindered from being somebody of recognized worth because of the forces related to this area. It gets so bad that some of us stop trying in any constructive way and turn to excusing our own failings by blaming such hindrances. Some feel persecution—both real and imagined—so keenly that we won't let ourselves experience the freedom and fun that is actually available.

"When fun is always kept just out of reach, hate is an easy thing to come by. And prejudice of the worst kind explodes in every direction, generating as in the frustration-aggression cycle . . ."

* * * * *

Key concepts that may be of use in enabling effective function as a counselor in this area:

'The term "prejudice" is a stumbling block in dealing with the real problems in this area. At best, it is a collective term covering injustices in the world related to hateful prejudgments, that is, judgments in advance of viewing facts. "Injustice" might be a better word to use in many instances. "Prejudice" can be simply a disruptive cop out, hindering progress.

Much more functional are the concepts of scapegoating or projection and displaced aggression (in understanding how people sometimes unjustifiably blame others and unconsciously develop rationalizations to support their views) or frustration-aggression cycle (in understanding how the problems get worse and worse).

Concerns which enable, restrict, or prevent counseling function in this area:

Physical settings *should provide for confidentiality . . .*

Counselor load and time available *should be such as to enable counselor and counselee to meet promptly in times of crisis.*

Attitudes of student counselee *may be as destructive as the attitudes of those others who initially are pictured to be to blame. A poor-me attitude should be replaced by the seven-point approach, stressing a validly optimistic look ahead.*

Attitudes of counselee's peers *may dominate . . .*

Attitudes of parents *may have been introjected by the counselee but be in conflict, consciously or unconsciously, with the counselee's espoused supposed beliefs . . .*

Attitudes of administrators *may enable or restrict, depending on their capacities and their views of their staff, the community, and related laws and rulings.*

Attitudes of counselor *may be seen as prejudiced by counselees and others, justified or not . . .*

Counselor competencies necessary to function in this area include *an ability to genuinely accept counselees, regardless of race, creed, nationality, or gender; a thorough understanding of how or why people tend to put down other people and an ability to pass such understanding along . . . And skill in the counseling imperatives . . .*

Background knowledge and/or experience necessary to function in this area: *Wide and varied, with an outcome of a recognition of the importance of taking advantage of available opportunities and working to make things better . . .*

References accelerating development in this area: *Select from those that suggest how to put it together rather than burn it all down.*

* * * * *

In practice, the worksheet may be found to be something of a projective tool, akin to an incomplete sentences blank. And we are reminded that our entries are not final pronouncements, but fragmentary beginnings, on which to build.

INDEX

A

Abuse 150
  sexual 167-83
Accept 99-102, 239
Acceptance 177
Accountability systems 284
Action 132-3, 143, 146, 147, 188-9, 208, 211, 218, 245
  enable 123-7
  sex 156-7
Activities 221
Actualization 79
Aftermath 175-6
Agents of change
  counselors 251
Aggression 31-34
  definition 31
Ahead
  See look ahead
  look 143-5
AIDS 192, 197
Alive
  staying professionally 249-66
Ambivalent 36
American Personnel and Guidance Association 88
Anger 35
Anxiety 35
Approach-avoidance 36
Arlin, case of 151-3

B

Bain, H. 259
Behaviors
  destructive 209
  purpose of 113
  why 113
Belonging 143-4, 146, 147, 193-4, 209, 211, 245
  sex 159-61
Belongingness 218, 222

C

Careers 215-29
  ahead 215-29
  development 220, 222-3
  development, definition 220, 221
  education 227
  education, definition 220-1
  educational 220, 221
  exploration 220-4, 227-9
  exploration, definition 221
  guidance 220
  guidance, definition 220, 221
  training 225
Career education 295
Carroll, L. 150
Catharsis 87, 177
Cheryl, case of 140
Chuck, case of 49-50
College 224-6
  admission 299
Conceptualizations
  functional 178-80
  valid 178-80
Conferences 283
Confidentiality 297-8
  parents 65
  provide 82-5
Conflict 36-8
Consequences
  note 91-4
Considerations 80
  See imperatives
Consultation 283
Control
  environment 180

Coordination 283-4
Counseling
    client-centered 41
    description of the practice 276-84
    directive 41
    functions 53
    historical background 271-3
    imperatives in 127-9
    minimize threat 80
    non-directive 41
    practice 267-303
    working out the approach 43-5
Counseling and group guidance 277-8
Counseling imperatives
    See imperatives
Counselor
    See school counselor
    agents of change 251
    available for 1
    function 61
    functional orientation 329-40
    general working 270
    influential people 4
    moments of decision 4
    recommendations 251-4
    role 273-6
    seeing all students 293
Counselor qualifications
    accept 99-102
    define rational reality 107-9
    empathize 97-9
    relate 102-4
    teach concepts 105-7
Counselor's role
    with clients 163-6
    related to client's sexual concerns 163-6
    suicide 240-7
Current concerns 285-300
Curriculum 278-80

D

Disappointment 73
Discover 208
Discovering 221
Discovery 143, 146, 147, 190-1, 211, 245
    sex 157-8
Discovery and learning 133-4
Dollard, J. 31, 37
Doyle, case of 195-6
Drug abuse 298-9
Drug Task Force 111
Drugs 185-99, 194
    abuse 198, 207-8
    deceptive 198
    mind-expanding 185
    subculture 198
    substitutes 194
Dugan, B. 260

E

Eclectic 41-57
Education
    vocational 220
Ego ideal 117
Elope, case of 12-3
Emotional experience 211, 245
    See experience, emotional
    sex 158-9
Empathize 97-9
Employment applications 299
Environment
    control 180
Esteem 137
Evaluation 284
Evil, case of 15-9
Excitement 221
Experience
    See emotional experience
    emotional 134-7, 143, 146, 148, 191-3, 209
Exploration
    career 220-40

F

Facts
    face 61-4
Failure 255-60
    definition 256

Family
    support 180
    understanding 180
Fear 35
Feelings of pride 222
Fight and flight reactions 39
Figure it out 59-75
Financial aid 299
Fine
    as an answer 45-8
Fixation 169
Flanagan, Father 68
Formula
    teen fun 145-6
    using in counseling 146-8
Freedom
    maximize 88-91
Freud, S. 31, 117
Frustration 31-3
    definition 31
Frustration-aggression cycle 31-4
Full life 219
Fun 131, 155, 158
    formula 188
    jobs 217-9
    oriented society 131-48
    teen fun formula 145-6

G

Generalist or specialist 290-1
George, case of 31, 201
Gilliam, Judge 68
Glasser, W. 66, 265
Goal
    help to establish 115-8
Goals and objectives 299-300
Group activities 226-9
Group procedures 291-2
Group work 315-27
Growth
    professional 284
Guarantees
    no 90-day 51-3
Guidance
    vocational 220
Guilt
    resolution of 178

H

Haight-Ashbury Clinic 186, 212
Hays, D. 309
Health
    check it out 60
Help 5-22
    accepting 11
    daring to 231-47
    listening 11
    nonthreatening 11
    relatively confidential setting 11
Helping
    on the scene 204-8
Herr, E. 251
Hierarchy of needs 137, 258
High school plan
    developing 315-27
Hittner, A. 186, 212
Holt, L. 310-11
Homeostasis 29-31, 51
Homosexuality 236-40
Honest 64-5
Hoyt, K. 19-20
Hypnotist 38

I

I don't know
    as an answer 45-8
Imperatives 80, 239-40
    accept 204
    accept the person 128
    define rational reality 128, 204
    empathize 128
    emphasize the positive 128
    enable action 128-9
    explore and discover purpose 128
    help develop plans 128
    help establish goals 128
    listen 85-8, 128, 204
    maximize freedom 88-91, 128
    minimize threat 80-1, 128
    note the consequences 91-4
    one step at a time 128
    provide confidentiality 82-5, 128

- recognize responsibility 128
- relate 128
- teach concepts 128

Individual procedures 291-2
Infant
- monstrous 78-80

Influences
- on behavior 38-40
- perception 38-40
- unconscious 38-40

Inner control 173
- insufficient 168, 170

Innovation 284
Intercourse
- sexual 8-10

Issues 285-300

J

Jean, case of 54-6
Jobs
- fun 217-9

Jones, E. 213

K

King, M.L. 309
Krumboltz, J. 88-91

L

Lack of realistic understanding 168, 171-3
Laura, case of 241-2
Learning 143, 146, 147, 218, 221
Learning and discovery 133-4
Legislative and governmental recommendations 302
Liaison 283-4
Limitations 255-60
Listen 85-8, 240
Load 289-90
Look ahead 143-5, 146, 148, 175, 180-1, 197-9, 211, 215, 218, 222, 223, 227, 246, 247, 331
- sex 155-6, 163

Looper, L. 192, 255
Love 137
- tough 220

M

Malone, F. 252
Maslow, A.H. 27
Masters, W. 153
McBride, W. 150
McMartin Pre-school case 265
Media 292
Media tool 315-27
Mehl, C. 212
Miller, N.E. 31, 37
Mooney Problem Check Lists 86

N

Need to belong 137-8
Needs 26-9, 53, 56
- biological 137
- esteem 137
- hierarchy 27-9
- love 137
- safety 137
- self-actualization 138
- to belong 137-8

O

Offenders
- treatment of juvenile 181-3

Ombudsmen
- beyond 95-109

One step at a time 124-5, 145
Opportunity 168, 170, 173
Orientation worksheet
- completed example 333-7
- counselor's 329-340

Orientations
- functional 3, 175, 181, 237, 239, 247, 265, 266, 331

P

- Participation
  - in the profession 305
- Paulson, B. 42
- Pell, Senator 77
- Plan
  - developing 73
  - help to develop 120-3
- Planning
  - resistance to 215-7
- Positive
  - definition 119
  - emphasize 118-20
- Practice
  - counseling 267-303
- Predispositions 168-70, 173
- Preparation
  - professional 300-2
- Prevention 173, 174, 208-13
  - on the scene 201-13
- Profession
  - participation in 305-13
- Program development 284
- Promises 70-3
- Public relations 283-4
- Purpose
  - explore and discover 112-5

Q

- Quit and blame 264

R

- Raminez, E. 111
- Rationalization 62
- Rationalize 39
- Reaction formation 39, 240
- Reagan, N. 205
- Reality
  - define a rational 107-9, 240
  - in fun-oriented society 131-48
- Reality testing 149
  - rational 177-8
- Reality time 258
- Recollections 307-13
- Recommendations 300-3
  - counselor 251-4
- Records 281-2
- Registration 278-80
- Regression 169
- Relate 102-4
- Relationships 162, 285-9
  - administrators 288
  - healthy 49
  - parents 286-7
  - priorities 289
  - pupil personnel services 289
  - short-term 68-70
  - students 285-6
  - teachers 287
- Reporter 175
- Repress 39
- Research 284
- Resistance
  - to planning 215-7
- Resolution
  - of guilt 178
- Respect 65-8
- Responsibility 111-2
  - one step at a time 111-29
- Restructure
  - autistically 39, 100, 173, 179
- Rob, case of 140-1
- Rogers, C. 41, 66, 249
- Role and function 262
- Roll and function 260-6
- Rule
  - one step at a time 124

S

- School counselor
  - See counselor
  - definition 273
  - responsibilities 275
- School reports 254
- Self 34-6
- Self-actualization
  - need 138
- Self-discovery 79

Sex
  abuse 167-83
  action 156-7
  being somebody 161
  belonging 159-61
  bonds between people 159-60
  consuming concerns 151-3
  counselor's role with clients 163-6
  discovery 157-8
  emotional experience 158-9
  film 231-6
  look ahead 155-6
  natural function 153-5, 167, 169, 179
  no four-letter word 149-66
  related to eating 154-5
  voice 161-3
Sex abuse 178
Situation
  defining 48-51
  sorting out 57
Six of them, case of 5-10
Skinner, B.F. 88-90
Slides
  wording associated 318-27
Society
  fun-oriented 131-48
Somebody 146, 210, 218, 246
  being 139-43, 144, 147, 195-7, 311, 219-20
  sex 161
Somny, J. 86
Special course placement 278-80
Stand on own two feet 79-80
Stone walls 185-99
Stoned 185-99
Stoning 185-99
Student
  discipline 296-7
Stupid, case of 13-9
Substitutes
  drugs 194
Success 219, 256
Suicide 240-7
  counselor's role 246
Support
  family 180

T

Teach concepts 105-7
Teen fun formula 145-6
Test score
  check it out 59-60
  meaning of 59-60
Testing 280-1
Theory
  makes perfect 23-40
Threat
  minimize 80-1, 240
Three R's 174
Time
  available 77-93
  limited 77-93
Trauma 175
Treatment 175
  juvenile offenders 181-3
  of victims 176-83
Trust 211

U

Uncooperative 73-5
Understanding 173
  family 180

V

Value formation 295-6
Victim
  identities 177
  treatment of 176-83
Vocations 220
Voice 144, 146, 148, 194-5, 210, 211, 218, 245, 265
  in what's going on 138-9
  sex 161-3

W

White House Conference on Youth 186, 187
Williams, D. 88-90
Williamson, E.G. 41
Worksheet
  counselor's functional orientation 329-40

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He has served as National President of the American School Counselor Association, 1970-71, and member of ASCA Governing Board, 1967-72. In these years he initiated a joint committee on media of ASCA and the American Association of School Librarians; also, a liaison committee between ASCA and the Exploring (BSA) National Committee. He developed the first written ASCA Publications policies and procedures. Representing school counselors at the 1971 White House Conference, he was a party to the Education Task Force Recommending a ratio of one counselor for every fifty students and authored such statements in the report as "counselors should be free of clerical and administrative duties and should direct their major attention to working directly with and for students."

Before and since, he held various offices and memberships in ASCA, AACD, and NEA.

Other books written by Don include *For Thinking Teens*, 1967; *Homeroom Guidance Activities*, 1967; *Stories for Thinking Teens*, 1968; and *For the Time of Your Life*, 1975. Among his writings for journals and projects is "The Practice of Counseling in the Secondary School," in *The Status of Guidance and Counseling in the Nation's Schools*. In this U.S. Office of Education funded project, Don held the distinction of being the only practicing-school-counselor, non-doctorate writer of the eighteen contracted by AACD. (A copy of the paper appears as Appendix A in this book.) Also his articles and stories appear in popular magazines, for example, "If They Call Your Child 'Chicken'," *Family Circle*, May, 1960, and "An Act of Love," *McCall's*, June, 1975. He served as a consultant in the writing of *Transition*, a program of the American Guidance Service . . .

As a hobby, Don is actively involved with photography. He and his wife, Kristina, continue to share an active interest in photography, capturing western scenics and wildlife. (They were wed as photographers in San Francisco, not long after Don was discharged from the 82nd Airborne at the conclusion of World War II.)

Counseling Kids is outspoken, written in anecdotal style and makes valued reading for all interested in kids. Don entwines front-line experience and moments of national leadership with sound approaches to the challenges at hand. Featured are the ***imperatives,*** as he sees them, and his seven-point "fun formula" approach to sex, drug abuse, and career choice.

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